

DON'T WORRY BE HEALTHY

A Buddhist Guide for Health & Healing

VOLUME 1

Compiled by

Dr. PHANG CHENG KAR



DON'T WORRY BE HEALTHY

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Book cover:

"BUDDHA CARES FOR THE SICK"

(Mural at Da Lin Tzu Chi Hospital)

Painted by Li Chien-yi

Courtesy of Tzu Chi Foundation

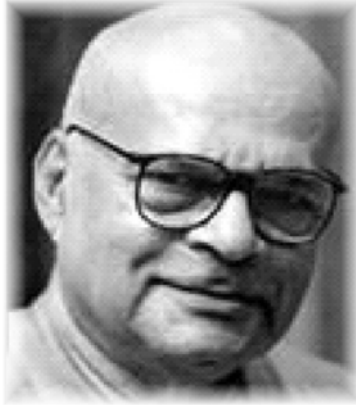
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Dr. PHANG CHENG KAR (MD)

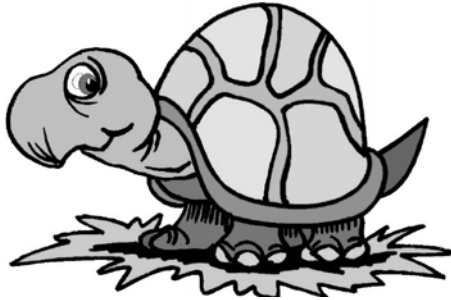
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This book is dedicated to
Venerable Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda Maha
Nayaka Thero on his 86th birthday
on March 18, 2005

May he continue to be
well, happy, healthy
and live long to propagate
the sublime Dharma for the
happiness of all sentient beings!

CAUTION!



The subject matter covered in this book is general and not prescriptive in nature.

It should NOT be used as substitute to actual medical care and consultation for specific illness. Early diagnosis, regular follow-ups with physician, compliance with treatment, regular exercise, well balanced diet, good social support and positive mental attitude are still the gold standards in healthcare. This book only serves to spiritually augment whatever medical treatment you are undergoing.



FOREWORD



Dr. Phang Cheng Kar's "Don't Worry, Be Healthy - A Buddhist Guide for Health & Healing" is an excellent combination of medical and dhamma knowledge in seeking a life of wellness & happiness. The good doctor has used his professional knowledge and experience as a medical doctor together with his understanding of the Buddha Dhamma to write a guide for health and healing.

Mind Body medicine is becoming an important field of medical study in the modern world although the Buddha over 2,500 years ago had taught the power of the mind over our life. Western medicine has been treating man's diseases by concentrating on the body, treating the effect but not the cause. Thus depending on continuous use of drugs to treat one's illness. This might be good for the pharmaceutical business but not for the patients who might have to suffer the side effects of the long term use of these drugs.

It is much better to treat the cause itself thus relieving one self on the dependence of drugs. The best medicine is to practice mental cultivation and appropriate use of drugs in treating one's illnesses. This guide will be helpful in preventing and even

healing many common medical problems faced by modern man like pain, addiction, stress, anxiety and depression. There are also important topics on healthy eating, caring for the sick, past life regression therapy and how to face death.

Congratulations to Dr. Phang Cheng Kar for this excellent contribution towards the field of Buddhist Education by focusing on achieving wellness through Buddhist Practice.

Thanks to the sponsors who have supported the printing of this book.

May You All Be Well & Happy.

Ven. B. Saranankara Thero,
Chief High Priest,
Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple,
Sentul, Kuala Lumpur.

31st March 2005



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



I would like to state on record here that in the compilation of this book, I have taken some graphics, portion of writing, quotations, stories and similes from many sources. I have tried my very best to seek permission and acknowledge the sources. If due acknowledgement has not been made, I sincerely regret the omission and apologise for the oversight. I hope this acknowledgement would serve as my sincere request for permission, in order that many will benefit from the compilation of this book that will be printed for free distribution.

I would like to especially thank the following people who have contributed to this book in various ways:

- SIS. SOW YENG
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- BRO. ROBERT YAP

&

- ALL PATIENTS & BUDDHIST FRIENDS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO MY EXPERIENCE AS A HOLISTIC PSYCHOSPIRITUAL MEDICAL DOCTOR



PREFACE



Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhasa

As I'm writing this, I have just come back from Ipoh General Hospital ICU visiting my sister-in-law, a young and active Buddhist Tzu Chi member. She is four months pregnant and has just gone through a high risk emergency operation for her newly diagnosed brain tumour. In the visit, I'm delighted to see that many of the principles found in this book are put into action by her Buddhist friends and family members to support her recovery.

My interest in this area of Buddhist principles for health and healing started when I was given the opportunity to present a paper entitled, "Total Health Through Dharma" at the year 2000 Global Conference in Buddhism held in Singapore. Since then, I have been accumulating literature and experience pertaining to this topic. Whatever has been compiled into this book is no way exhaustive but it's good enough for a start, as a guide for anyone who is ignorant on what can be done from a Buddhist perspective during sickness.

When I wrote my first book, "Don't Worry, Be Happy - A medical student's motivation and inspirational

guide", I was actually preparing myself ahead for my career as a medical doctor. As for this second book, I'm also preparing myself but for a greater challenge in life - SICKNESS. I hope I'm able to live and grow from my sickness when it strikes. May you all find joy in reading this book and be blessed with good health, happiness and longevity.

Dr. Phang Cheng Kar (MD)

pckar@tm.net.my

20th February, 2005

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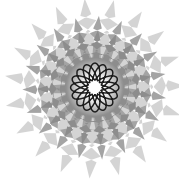
Thus have I understood the Buddha's
principle for health and healing that I would
like to share with all of you...

Chapter 1

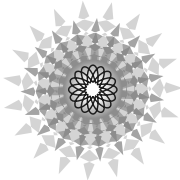


BUDDHA AS THE GREATEST PHYSICIAN

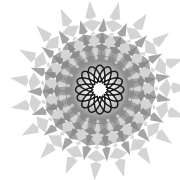
TRIPLE GEM - A HEALTH MODEL



BUDDHA
(Doctor)



DHARMA
(Medicine)



SANGHA
(Patients)

The Triple Gem is the highest authority of reverence in Buddhism and refers to 1. BUDDHA - the founder of Buddhism, 2. DHAMMA - the teachings of the Buddha, and 3. SANGHA - the Buddha's disciples who have fully understood and benefited from His teachings.

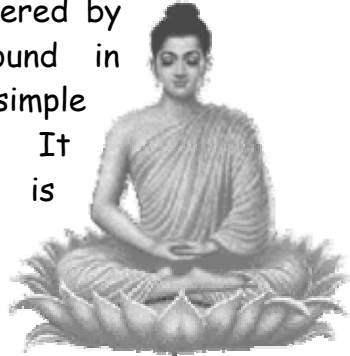
Another way of looking at the Triple Gem is by regarding the Buddha as a great DOCTOR, Dharma as the MEDICINE prescribed by the Buddha, and

Sangha as PATIENTS in complete remission who have been cured by the medicine prescribed by the Buddha.

How about us? We are all the patients who have not recovered from the common and universal dis-ease of LACK OF HAPPINESS or unsatisfactoriness in life. The Buddha who is also described in the scriptures as an unsurpassable surgeon and physician (*anuttaro bhisakko sallakatto*) is a super-specialist in this kind of disease. He is the best in the diagnosis and treatment of this disease, and we can all confidently take refuge in his medical expertise to eradicate this disease and completely heal us.

HEALTH IS THE GREATEST GAIN

The above saying was uttered by the Buddha and is now found in Dhammapada verse 204. It is a simple yet often neglected advice. It basically means that health is something very precious, similar to the meaning of the English proverb, "Health is the greatest wealth".



Unfortunately, we are usually only aware of it when we lose it and fall into sickness. A good way to continuously remind ourselves this important message is by frequently paying visit to patients in hospital. This will definitely awakens us to the vulnerability of our health and helps us to appreciate it fully. On the other hand, when we ourselves are sick, we should mindfully note the pain and discomfort. This will again help us to better appreciate our health when we recover from the sickness later.

This same saying also tells us that health needs to be *GAINED*. It's not a *GIFT*. It doesn't come free especially when we are getting old. We can't maintain

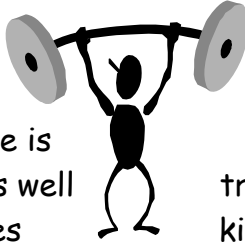
our health just by praying to the Buddha, "May I be Strong! May I be Healthy". We have to work hard for it by taking the necessary steps e.g. do exercise, take well balanced diet, have adequate sleep, quit smoking, meditate regularly, perform meritorious actions etc. It has to be maintained in this way, the hard way and that's why it's precious.



SICKNESS IS THE GREATEST
SUFFERING IN LIFE
AND IS ALSO THE MOST
HOPELESS ENCOUNTER.
THERE IS AN OLD SAYING,
"EVEN THE MIGHTY
HERO CANNOT RESIST
SICKNESS" IT IS FUTILE TO HAVE WEALTH AND
FAME ABOUND WHEN YOU ARE NOT IN GOOD
HEALTH, THUS TO BE HEALTHY IS ALWAYS A
B L E S S I N G

-Master Shi Zheng Yan-

☺ GOOD HEALTH ☺



When you are
the world outside is
When your mind is well
the world comes

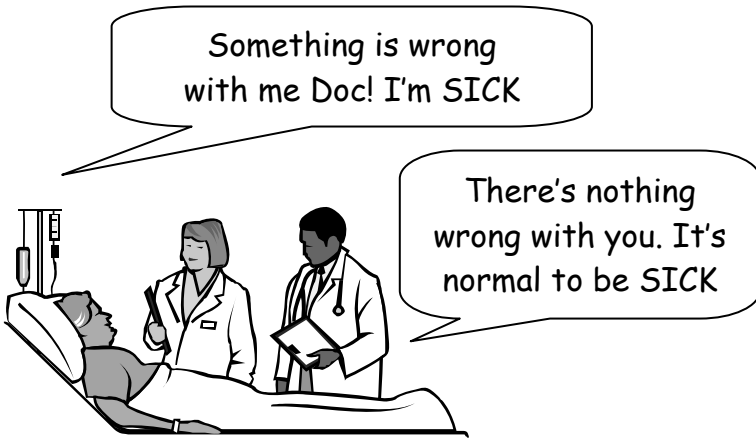
healthy and fit,
yours to roam,
trained and strong,
kissing at your feet

Then life unfolds its cherry pink cheeks,
Gold glowing in throbbing rich veins
For a while the world's temporal light shines
It's time when fellas ride high
But health is fragile, so take care
Brittle like thin crystals,
The happy world too may break,
Many strong men barely make forty,
Many sickly ladies drag on but with frail bodies,
So will it be a spring too short
Or a winter too long?
What matters finally will be how life is lived.

-Ven. Sujiva-

IT'S NORMAL TO BE SICK

Don't run away from sickness!



We usually become very upset when we fall sick. We become even more upset when we don't recover from our sickness as soon as we expect to be. Sickness has been considered as abnormal and a nuisance to life. But, who has never fallen sick? None! Old age, sickness and death are part and parcel of life. Nobody can run away from them. They also tend to come when we are least ready for them. The more we try to run away from them, the more we will suffer. We should instead just welcome them and live with them since they are normal and natural.

The following is a story from Ajahn Brahmavamso to further illustrate the point:

In my public talks, I often ask the audience to raise their hand if they have ever been sick. Nearly everyone puts up their hand. (Those who don't are either asleep or probably lost in sexual fantasy!) This proves, I argue, that it is quite normal to be sick. In fact, it would be very unusual if you didn't fall sick from time to time. So, why, I ask, do you say when you visit the doctor, "There is something wrong with me, doctor?" It would be wrong only if you weren't sick sometimes. Thus a rational person should say instead, "THERE IS SOMETHING RIGHT WITH ME, DOCTOR. I'M SICK AGAIN!"

Whenever you perceive sickness as something wrong, you add unnecessary stress, even guilt, on top of the unpleasantness. In the nineteenth-century novel *Erehwon*, Samuel Butler envisaged a society in which illness was considered a crime and the sick were punished with jail term. In one memorable passage, the accused man, sniffing and sneezing in the dock, was berated by the judge as a serial offender. This was not the first time he had appeared before magistrate with a cold. Moreover, it was all his fault through eating junk food, failing to exercise

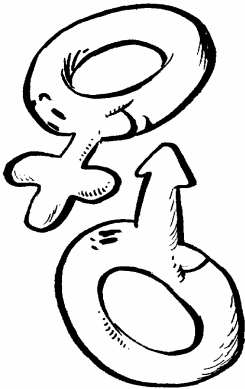
adequately, and following a stressful lifestyle. He was sentenced to several years in jail.

How many of us are led to feel guilty when we are sick? A fellow monk had been sick with an unknown illness for many years. He would spend day after day, week after week, in bed all day, too weak even to walk beyond his room. The monastery spared no expense or effort arranging every kind of medical therapy, orthodox and alternative, in an attempt to help him, but nothing seemed to work. He would think he was feeling better, stagger outside for a little walk, and then relapse for weeks. Many times they thought he would die.

One day, the wise abbot of the monastery had an insight into the problem. he went to the sick room. The bedridden monk stared up at the abbot with hopelessness. "I've come here," said the abbot, "on behalf of all the monks and nuns of the monastery, and also for the lay-people who support us. On behalf of all these people who love and care for you, I have come to give you permission to die. You don't have to get better."



At those words, the sick monk wept. He'd been trying so hard to get better. His friends had gone to so much trouble trying to help heal his sick body that he couldn't bear to disappoint them. He felt such a failure, so guilty, for not getting better. On hearing the abbot's words, he now felt free to be sick, even to die. He didn't need to struggle so hard to please his friends anymore. The release he felt caused him to cry. What do you think happened next? From that day on, he began to recover.



LIFE IS A SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED DIS-EASE

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

MIND MAKES ONE SICK MIND CAN ALSO HEAL

One evening, a man was invited to the home of a friend. As he was about to drink a cup of tea that was offered to him, he thought he saw a baby snake in the cup. He did not want to embarrass his hostess. So, he gathered his courage and swallowed the tea in one gulp. When the man returned home later that night, he began to feel severe pains in his stomach.



By the next day, the pains had grown worse. He consulted several doctors and tried many cures but none worked. The man who was then seriously ill thought he was about to die. Hearing of his condition, his friend invited him to visit her again. Sitting in the same place, he accepted another cup of tea. As the sick man lifted his cup to drink, he suddenly saw the snake again. This time he decided to speak up and draw his hostess's attention to it. Without a word, she pointed to the ceiling above her guest. He looked up. There, just above him, hanging from a beam, was a length of rope. The sick man realized all at once that what he had thought was a baby snake was simply the

reflection of a rope. The two friends looked at each other and laughed. The pain of the sick man vanished instantly and he recovered perfect health.



MIND PRECEDES ALL MENTAL STATES.
MIND IS THEIR CHIEF; THEY ARE ALL MIND-WROUGHT.
IF WITH AN IMPURE MIND A PERSON SPEAKS OR ACTS,
SUFFERING FOLLOWS HIM LIKE THE WHEEL
THAT FOLLOWS THE FOOT OF THE OX.
IF WITH A PURE MIND A PERSON SPEAKS OR ACTS,
HAPPINESS FOLLOWS HIM LIKE
HIS NEVER-DEPARTING SHADOW.

-Dhammapada vs 1 and 2-

**WHEN THE BODY IS SICK
DO NOT ALLOW
THE MIND TO BE SICK**

-Nakulapita Sutta-

Could you name me a person with the following medical problems:

- DIABETES
- HYPERTENSION
- HIGH CHOLESTEROL
- HEART DISEASE
- CANCER

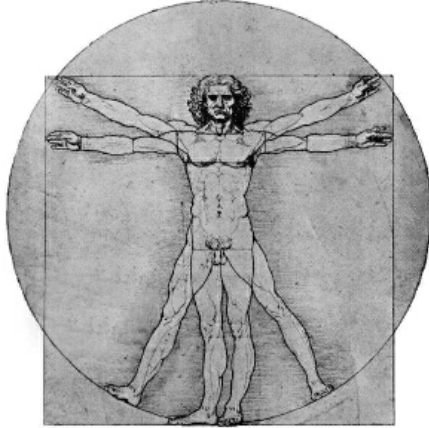


But, he is still MENTALLY strong and healthy?

**VEN. DR. K. SRI DHAMMANANDA
MAHA NAYAKA THERA**

(Chief High Buddhist priest of
Malaysia and Singapore)

FIRST HEAL THE MIND



NO MATTER HOW PAINED OR DISEASED THE BODY,
KEEP THE MIND CALM AND MINDFUL.

LET NOT THE MIND TOO BECOME DISEASED.

LET THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE BODY
BE AS THEY ARE, BUT CURE THE MIND OF
THE DISEASE OF IMPURITIES.

A PERSON WITH MIND CLEANSED OF ALL
IMPURITIES IS WORTHY OF HONOUR AND
WORSHIP EVEN IF HIS BODY BE DISEASED.

-Sayadaw Thabyekan-

RIGHT DIAGNOSIS RIGHT TREATMENT



IF A PERSON'S CONDITION AND ILLNESS ARE NOT DIAGNOSED CORRECTLY, THAT PERSON WILL BE GIVEN MEDICINE NOT APPROPRIATE TO THE ILLNESS. INSTEAD OF CURING THE PATIENT, THE ILLNESS GETS WORSE AND MAY KILL THE PATIENT. IN LIKE MANNER, ONLY WHEN A PERSON'S CHARACTER ARE CORRECTLY ASSESSED CAN THAT PERSON BE GIVEN THE MOST SUITABLE AND EFFICACIOUS INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIS WELL-BEING.

-Sayadaw Thabyekan-

DHAMMA IS THE BEST MEDICINE

OF ALL THE MEDICINE IN THE WORLD,
MANIFOLD AND VARIOUS,
THERE IS NONE LIKE
THE MEDICINE OF DHARMA



Dharma is the Buddha's teaching. It is a very potent medicine for the common and universal sickness that we all have - LACK OF HAPPINESS or unsatisfactoriness in life. It is particularly potent for emotional pain like stress, anxiety and depression. As for physical pain, it strengthens our mind so that we can cope with the physical pain that we experience more efficiently. It is also the ultimate cure for all sickness. How could it be? It is through the Dharma, that we would eventually become enlightened and thus end the cycle of birth and death. When there is no more rebirth, we would no longer be subjected to the life suffering package of old age, sickness and death. Therefore,

Dharma is the best medicine and the ultimate cure for all sickness.

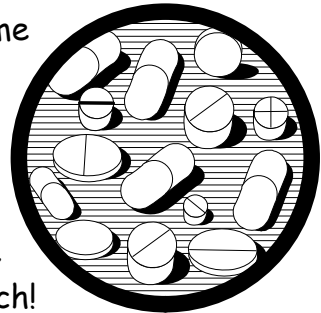
MAN CANNOT CLAIM EVEN
A MOMENT OF TRUE HEALTH.
FREEDOM FROM PHYSICAL DISEASE
MAY BE POSSIBLE BUT
ONLY TEMPORARILY.
IT IS ONLY BY CESSATION OF
BECOMING EMBODIED IN A PHYSICAL
FORM THAT FULL FREEDOM
FROM ILLNESS CAN BE OBTAINED.

-Samyutta Nikaya-

COMPLIANCE WITH MEDICATION

One of the greatest challenges of a doctor is to persuade patients to take medications. Many of us are aware that we are sick. But, not all of us are willing to take medications as prescribed by our doctors to cure our sickness. The following is a wonderful story to illustrate the point.

Once a man became sick and went to a Chinese doctor for help. The doctor examined him and then wrote out some prescription of herbal medicines for him. This man was told about his diagnosis and he had complete faith in his doctor that he could be cured. He returned home and in his special prayer room he put his doctor's picture in a golden frame. He put all his medicine beside his doctor's picture. Then, he sat down and paid respect three times to that picture. He also offered some sweets, flower and incense. Finally, he took out his herbal medicines and took out those prescriptions and he started to recite, "Two tablets in the morning! One teaspoon after lunch! Two tablets before going to sleep!" All day long, he

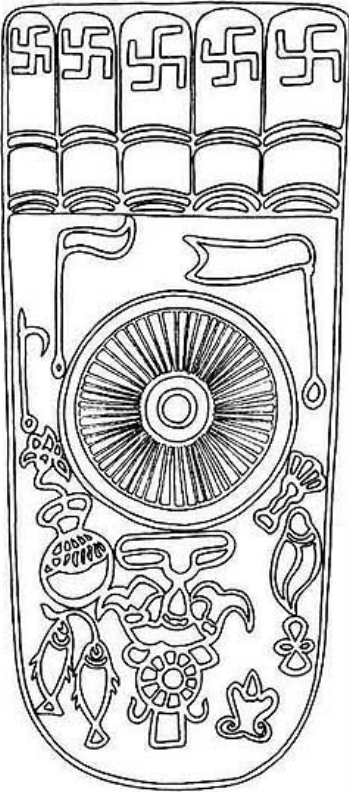


kept on reciting the doctor's prescription because he had great faith in the doctor.

He developed his faith after he encountered the doctor and asked him why he prescribed those herbal medicines. The doctor was very compassionate and kindly told him, "Look, this is your sickness and this is the root cause of the sickness. If you take the following natural herbal medicines as described by me, you will recover within two weeks". The man thought, "My doctor is so intelligent, caring and wonderful. His prescription is the best that I ever seen". Due to his faith, he went around and told everyone about the greatness of his doctor. Despite that he has not been cured yet, he already started to encourage others to use the prescription. But, he will never be cured unless he put the medications into his mouth.

This is exactly what a lot of us are doing. No doubt it is important to have faith in the Buddha-Dharma. But, faith alone does not help to overcome our sickness. It will only work if we take the medicine by ourselves and practice the Buddha's teaching diligently. Only then healing can take effect.

IN THE BUDDHA'S PATH



EVEN MEDICINE WHICH IS
CORRECTLY PRESCRIBED
MUST BE TAKEN IF A SICK
PERSON IS TO BE CURED.
IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO MERELY
RECITE THE NAME
OF THE MEDICINE. IN LIKE
MANNER, ONE LEARNED
IN THE DHARMA CAN STILL BE
LACKING IN GOODNESS,
FOR MERELY RECITING THE
DHARMA IS ALSO
IN ITSELF NOT ENOUGH. THE
DHARMA MUST BE
PUT INTO PRACTICE FOR A
PERSON TO BECOME
WISE AND RIGHTEOUS.

-Sayadaw Thabyekan-

THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS - A MEDICAL MODEL

The Four Noble Truths is the essence of the Buddha's teaching and they are summarized as the following:



1st Noble Truth

- There is **SUFFERING** in life

2nd Noble Truth

- The Cause of suffering in life is **CRAVING***

3rd Noble Truth

- The complete End of suffering in life is possible and it is known as **NIRVANA**

4th Noble Truth

- The Way to attain Nirvana is by cultivating the **NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH****

The Four Noble Truths can be viewed from a medical perspective as a model of sickness:

1st Noble Truth - There is **SUFFERING** in life with mental & physical sickness

2nd Noble Truth - is on the **AETIOLOGY** of sickness

3rd Noble Truth - is on the **PROGNOSIS** of sickness

4th Noble Truth - is on the **MANAGEMENT** of sickness

The Buddha is indeed a great doctor. As a great doctor, he is holistic in His treatment of sickness. He does not only cure physical sickness but also heal us mentally and spiritually.

A lot of people say that Buddhism is a pessimistic religion as it always talks about SUFFERING. This is absolutely not true! The Buddha is a very optimistic doctor. He knows about the CAUSE of our sufferings/sickness (2nd Noble Truth) and ensures us that there is a complete CURE for it (3rd Noble Truth). Most importantly, He also knows about the WAY to cure our sufferings/sickness (4th Noble Truth). Isn't that optimistic? Isn't the Buddha the type of doctor whom we all would like to consult to completely cure our sufferings/sickness? I'm sure you all do. So, don't wait! Get an 'appointment' at the nearest Buddhist temple or centre as soon as possible to learn about the Buddha's teaching.

* Attitude of life characterised by greed, hatred and ignorance.

** Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration, Right Understanding & Right Thought.

THE NOBLE PURGATIVE

The Buddha in the Virecana Sutta has prescribed a very powerful noble purgative that can completely heal us from our sickness.

"Monks, doctors give a purgative for warding off diseases caused by bile, diseases caused by phlegm, diseases caused by the internal wind property. There is a purging there; I don't say that there's not, but it sometimes succeeds and sometimes fails. So I will teach you the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress & despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress & despair. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said: "Now, what is the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death;

beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress & despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress & despair?

"In one who has right VIEW, wrong view is purged away, and the many evil, unskillful mental qualities that come into play in dependence on wrong view are purged away as well, while the many skillful mental qualities that depend on right view go to the culmination of their development.

"In one who has right RESOLVE, wrong resolve is purged away...

"In one who has right SPEECH, wrong speech is purged away...

"In one who has right ACTION, wrong action is purged away...

"In one who has right LIVELIHOOD, wrong livelihood is purged away...

"In one who has right EFFORT, wrong effort is purged away...

"In one who has right MINDFULNESS, wrong mindfulness is purged away...

"In one who has right CONCENTRATION, wrong concentration is purged away...

"In one who has right KNOWLEDGE, wrong knowledge is purged away...

"In one who has right RELEASE, wrong release is purged away, and the many evil, unskillful mental qualities that come into play in dependence on wrong release are purged away as well, while the many skillful mental qualities that depend on right release go to the culmination of their development.

"This, monks, is the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress & despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress & despair."



THE BUDDHA IS LIKE A PHYSICIAN.
JUST AS A DOCTOR MUST KNOW THE DIAGNOSIS
OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ILLNESS,
THEIR CAUSES, THE ANTIDOTES AND REMEDIES,
AND MUST BE ABLE TO APPLY THEM, SO ALSO THE
BUDDHA HAS TAUGHT THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS
WHICH INDICATE THE RANGE OF SUFFERING, ITS
ORIGIN, ITS CESSATION, AND THE WAY WHICH
LEAD TO ITS CESSATION.

-Dr. Edward Conze-

IS BUDDHISM GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH?

-Stephen S. Hall-

THE NEW YORK TIMES, 14th
September, 2003 - In the
spring of 1992, out of the blue,
the fax machine in Richard
Davidson's office at the
department of psychology at
the University of Wisconsin at
Madison spit out a letter from
Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai



Lama. Davidson, a Harvard-trained neuroscientist, was making a name for himself studying the nature of positive emotion, and word of his accomplishments had made it to northern India. The exiled spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists was writing to offer the minds of his monks - in particular, their meditative prowess - for scientific research.

Most self-respecting American neuroscientists would shrink from, if not flee, an invitation to study Buddhist meditation, viewing the topic as impossibly fuzzy and, as Davidson recently conceded, "Very flaky". But the Wisconsin professor, a longtime

meditator himself - he took leave from graduate school to travel through India and Sri Lanka to learn Eastern meditation practices - leapt at the opportunity. In September 1992, he organized and embarked on an ambitious data-gathering expedition to northern India, lugging portable electrical generators, laptop computers and electroencephalographic (EEG) recording equipment into the foothills of the Himalayas. His goal was to measure a remarkable, if seemingly evanescent, entity: the neural characteristics of the Buddhist mind at work. "These are the Olympic athletes, the gold medalists, of meditation," Davidson says.

The work began fitfully - the monks initially balked at being wired - but research into meditation has now attained a credibility unimaginable a decade ago. Over the past 10 years, a number of Buddhist monks, led by Matthieu Ricard, a French-born monk with a Ph.D. in molecular biology, have made a series of visits from northern India and other South Asian countries to Davidson's lab in Madison. Ricard and his peers have worn a Medusa-like tangle of 256-electrode EEG nets while sitting on the floor of a little booth and responding to visual stimuli. They have spent two to three hours at a time in a magnetic resonance imaging machine, trying to meditate amid the clatter and

thrum of the brain-imaging machinery.

No data from these experiments have been published formally yet, but in "Visions of Compassion," a compilation of papers that came out last year, Davidson noted in passing that in one visiting monk, activation in several regions of his left prefrontal cortex - an area of the brain just behind the forehead that recent research has associated with positive emotion - was the most intense seen in about 175 experimental subjects.

In the years since Davidson's fax from the Dalai Lama, the neuroscientific study of Buddhist practices has crossed a threshold of acceptability as a topic worthy of scientific attention. Part of the reason for this lies in new, more powerful brain-scanning technologies that not only can reveal a mind in the midst of meditation but also can detect enduring changes in brain activity months after a prolonged course of meditation. And it hasn't hurt that some well-known mainstream neuroscientists are now intrigued by preliminary reports of exceptional Buddhist mental skills. Paul Ekman of the University of California at San Francisco and Stephen Kosslyn of Harvard have begun their own studies of the mental capabilities of monks. In addition, a few rigorous,

controlled studies have suggested that Buddhist-style meditation in Western patients may cause physiological changes in the brain and the immune system.

This growing, if sometimes grudging, respect for the biology of meditation is achieving a milestone of sorts this weekend, when some of the country's leading neuroscientists and behavioral scientists are meeting with Tibetan Buddhists, including the Dalai Lama himself, at a symposium held at M.I.T. "You can think of the monks as cases that show what the potential is here," Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, an emeritus professor of medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School who has pioneered work in the health benefits of meditation, says. "But you don't have to be weird or a Buddhist or sitting on top of a mountain in India to derive benefits from this. This kind of study is in its infancy, but we're on the verge of discovering hugely fascinating things."

In the 2,500-year history of Buddhism, the religion has directed its energy inward in an attempt to train the mind to understand the mental state of happiness, to identify and defuse sources of negative emotion and to cultivate emotional states like compassion to improve personal and societal well-being. For decades,

scientific research in this country has focused on the short-term effects of meditation on the nervous system, finding that meditation reduces markers of stress like heart rate and perspiration. This research became the basis for the "relaxation response" popularized by Prof. Herbert Benson of Harvard in the 1970's. Buddhist practice, however, emphasizes enduring changes in mental activity, not just short-term results. And it is the neural and physical impact of the long-term changes, achieved after years of intense practice, which is increasingly intriguing to scientists.

"In Buddhist tradition", Davidson explains, 'meditation' is a word that is equivalent to a word like 'sports' in the U.S. It's a family of activity, not a single thing". Each of these meditative practices calls on different mental skills, according to Buddhist practitioners. The Wisconsin researchers, for example, are focusing on three common forms of Buddhist meditation. "One is focused attention, where they specifically train themselves to focus on a single object for long periods of time," Davidson says. "The second area is where they voluntarily cultivate compassion. It's something they do every day, and they have special exercises where they envision negative events, something that causes anger or

irritability, and then transform it and infuse it with an antidote, which is compassion. They say they are able to do it just like that," he says, snapping his fingers. "The third is called 'open presence.' It is a state of being acutely aware of whatever thought, emotion or sensation is present, without reacting to it. They describe it as pure awareness."

The fact that the brain can learn, adapt and molecularly resculpture itself on the basis of experience and training suggests that meditation may leave a biological residue in the brain - a residue that, with the increasing sophistication of new technology, might be captured and measured. "This fits into the whole neuroscience literature of expertise," says Stephen Kosslyn, a Harvard neuroscientist, "where taxi drivers are studied for their spatial memory and concert musicians are studied for their sense of pitch. If you do something, anything, even play Ping-Pong, for 20 years, eight hours a day, there's going to be something in your brain that's different from someone who didn't do that. It's just got to be."

Jonathan D. Cohen, an expert on attention and cognitive control at Princeton, has been intrigued by reports that certain Buddhist adepts can maintain focus for extended periods. "Our experience - and

the laboratory evidence is abundant - is that humans have a limited capacity for attention," he says. "When we try to sustain attention for longer periods of time, like air-traffic controllers have to do, we consider it incredibly effortful and stressful. Buddhism is all about the ability to direct attention flexibly, and they talk about this state of sustained and focused attention that is pleasant, no longer stressful."

If nothing else, the meeting at M.I.T. this weekend shows that Davidson, one of its principal organizers, has managed to persuade a lot of marquee names to join him in making the case that it has become scientifically respectable to investigate these practices. Participants include mainstream scientists like Eric Lander, a leader of the human genome project; Cohen, a prominent researcher into the neural mechanisms of moral and economic decision-making; and Daniel Kahneman, the Nobel-Prize-winning Princeton economist who has pioneered research into the psychology of financial decision-making.

"Neuroscientists want to preserve both the substance and the image of rigor in their approach, so one doesn't want to be seen as whisking out into the la-la land of studying consciousness," concedes Cohen, who is chairman of a session at the M.I.T. meeting. "On

the other hand, my personal belief is that the history of science has humbled us about the hubris of thinking we know everything.

The "Monk experiments" at Madison are beginning to intersect with a handful of small but suggestive studies showing that Buddhist-style meditation may have not only emotional effects but also distinct physiological effects. That is, the power of meditation might be harnessed by non-Buddhists in a way that along with reducing stress and defusing negative emotion, improves things like immune function as well.

The power of the mind to influence bodily function has long been of interest to scientists, especially connections between the nervous, immune and endocrine systems. Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and Ronald Glaser, researchers at Ohio State University, for example, have done a series of studies showing that stress typically impairs immune function, though the exact woof and weave of these connections remains unclear.

Interestingly enough, the Buddhist subjects themselves are largely open to scientific explanation of their practices. "Buddhism is, like science, based on

experience and investigation, not on dogma," Matthieu Ricard explained in an e-mail message to me last month. The religion can be thought of as "a contemplative science," he wrote, adding, "the Buddha always said that one should not accept his teachings simply out of respect for him, but rediscover their truth through our own experience, as when checking the quality of a piece of gold by rubbing it on a piece on stone, melting it and so on."

In July, I joined Davidson and several colleagues as they stood in a control room and watched an experiment in progress. On a television monitor in the control room, a young woman sat in a chair in a nearby room, alone with her thoughts. Those thoughts - and, more specifically, the way she tried to control them when provoked - were the point of the experiment.

Davidson hypothesizes that a component of a person's emotional makeup reflects the relative strength, or asymmetry, of activity between two sides of the prefrontal cortex - the left side, which Davidson's work argues is associated with positive emotion, and the right side, where heightened activity has been associated with anxiety, depression and other mood disorders.

His research group has conducted experiments on infants and the elderly, amateur meditators and Eastern adepts, in an attempt to define a complex neural circuit that connects the prefrontal cortex to other brain structures like the amygdala, which is the seat of fear, and the anterior cingulate, which is associated with "conflict-monitoring." Some experiments have also shown that greater left-sided prefrontal activation is associated with enhanced immunological activity by natural killer cells and other immune markers.

When one scientist in the control room said, "All right, here comes the first picture," the young woman visibly tensed, gripping her elbows. Electrodes snaked out of her scalp and from two spots just below her right eye. And then, staring into a monitor, the young woman watched as a succession of mostly disturbing images flashed on a screen in front of her - a horribly mutilated body, a severed hand, a venomous snake poised to strike. Through earphones, the woman was prompted to modulate her emotional response as each image appeared, either to enhance it or suppress it, while the electrodes below her eye surreptitiously tapped into a neural circuit that would indicate if she had successfully modified either a positive or negative emotional response to the images.

"What's being measured," Davidson explained, "is a person's capacity to voluntarily regulate their emotional reactions."

Daren Jackson, the lead researcher on the study, added, "Meditation may facilitate more rapid, spontaneous recovery from negative reactions."

The visiting monks, as well as a group of meditating office workers at a nearby biotech company, have viewed these same gruesome images for the same purpose: to determine what Davidson calls each individual's "affective style" (if they are prone, for example, to hang onto negative emotional reactions) and if that style can be modulated by mental effort, of the sort that meditation seeks to cultivate. It is the hope of Davidson and his sometime collaborator Jon Kabat-Zinn that the power of meditation can be harnessed to promote not only emotional well-being but also physical health.

Since founding the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979, Kabat-Zinn and colleagues have treated 16,000 patients and taught more than 2,000 health professionals the techniques of "mindfulness meditation," which instructs a Buddhist-inspired

"nonjudgmental," total awareness of the present moment as a way of reducing stress. Along the way, Kabat-Zinn has published small but intriguing studies showing that people undergoing treatment for psoriasis heal four times as fast if they meditate; that cancer patients practicing meditation had significantly better emotional outlooks than a control group; and not only that meditation relieved symptoms in patients with anxiety and chronic pain but also that the benefits persisted up to four years after training. Kabat-Zinn is conducting a study for Cigna HealthCare to see if meditation reduces the costs of treating patients with chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome.

For the time being, meditation science is still stuck in a cultural no-man's land between being an oxymoron and something more substantive. "We're very early in the research," said Davidson, who admitted that "the vast majority of meditation research is schlock." But a well-designed study published in July by Davidson, Kabat-Zinn and their colleagues provides further evidence that the topic is legitimate.

In July 1997, Davidson recruited human subjects at a small biotech company outside Madison called Promega to study the effects of Buddhist-style meditation on

the neural and immunological activity of ordinary American office workers. The employees' brains were wired and measured before they began a course in meditation training taught by Kabat-Zinn. It was a controlled, randomized study, and after eight weeks, the researchers would test brain and immune markers to assess the effects of meditation.

There was reluctance among some employees to volunteer, but eventually, about four dozen employees participated in the study. Once a week for eight weeks, Kabat-Zinn would show up at Promega with his boom box, his red and purple meditation tape cassettes and his Tibetan chimes, and the assembled Promega employees - scientists, marketing people, lab techs and even some managers - would sit on the floor of a conference room and practice mindfulness for three hours.

In July, the results of the experiment at Promega were published in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*, and they suggest that meditation may indeed leave a discernible and lasting imprint on the minds and bodies of its practitioners. Among the Promega employees who practiced meditation for two months, the Wisconsin researchers detected significant increases in activity in several areas of the left

prefrontal cortex - heightened activity that persisted for at least four months after the experiment, when the subjects were tested again. Moreover, the meditators who showed the greatest increase in prefrontal activity after training showed a correspondingly more robust ability to churn out antibodies in response to receiving a flu vaccine. The findings, Kabat-Zinn suggested, demonstrated qualitative shifts in brain activity after only two months of meditation that mirror preliminary results seen in expert meditators like monks.

These results are still embraced cautiously, at best. Indeed, the Wisconsin study took five years to publish in part because several higher-profile journals to which it was submitted refused even to send it out for peer review, according to Davidson. And yet, by the time the study was over, the subjective experience of participants complemented the objective data: meditation ultimately left people feeling healthier, more positive and less stressed. "I really am an empiricist in every aspect of my life," said Michael Slater, a molecular biologist at Promega. "I doubt dogma, and I test it. I do it at the laboratory bench, but also in my personal life. So this

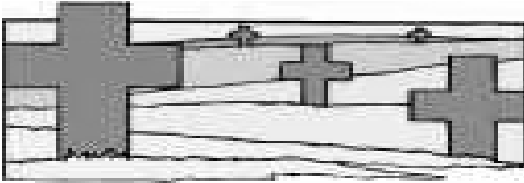


appealed to me, because I could feel the reduction in stress. I could tell I was less irritable. I had more capacity to take on more stressors. My wife felt I was easier to be around. So there were tangible impacts. For an empiricist, that was enough."

Granted, that's not enough for many other people, especially the scientific skeptics. But, Slater made an offhand comment that struck me as a highly convincing, though thoroughly unofficial, form of peer review. "My wife," Slater said quietly, "is dying for me to start meditating again."

Stephen S. Hall is the author, most recently, of "Merchants of Immortality: Chasing the Dream of Human Life Extension."

CAN THE BUDDHA PERFORM MIRACLES TO HEAL THE SICK AND BRING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE?



Jesus Christ of Nazareth can perform miracles. He can heal the sick and bring the dead back to life. Can the Buddha do that?

The Buddha can definitely heal the sick. Else, I wouldn't have thought of compiling this book. Even as Prince Siddhartha, He was traditionally said to have studied medicine and thus to have acquired knowledge about the medical techniques practiced in his day. The following story from the *Ratana Sutta* illustrates very well that the Buddha indeed has the power to perform 'miracles' to heal the sick.

It came to pass that the prosperous city of Vesali was at a stage of decline and its existence threatened by famine, SICKNESS, and evil spirits. The catastrophe culminated in many deaths and was aggravated with the haunting of evil spirits, which were attracted by the decaying corpse. Panic struck the city. This

critical juncture, two Licchavi nobles and a powerful retinue sought the assistance of the Buddha who was then residing at Rajagaha.

The Buddha having heard their grief and despair accepted their invitation with great sympathy and compassion. The Buddha then left Rajagaha for Vesali with a large company of monks. It was said that the Venerable Ananda Thera was included in the retinue. Having crossed the river Ganges, they finally reached the city.

A strange phenomenon then took place. First of all the Compassionate Buddha recited the *Ratana Sutta* (Ratana means precious jewel) to the inhabitants of the city of Vesali. The Venerable Ananda was then instructed to recite the same Sutta to the inhabitants throughout the city after having heard the Discourse recited by the Buddha. Sacred water was then sprinkled from the Buddha's own alms bowl. With the utterances of the Sutta, all the evil spirits abandoned the city and the inhabitants thereby were freed from their evil and harmful influences. The calamity of the city thus came to an end.



So, the Buddha did heal the sick with His power of wisdom and compassion. He did not only do it at an individual level (refer to page, "Spiritual Joy & Healing), but at a 'public health' scale targeting at the entire community in the city. But, the Buddha never calls that as a miracle. From the Buddha's point of view, that is just the natural POWER OF TRUTH. The power of Truth protects the follower of Truth! To him, the real miracle is the miracle of EDUCATION.

CHANGING THE WICKED OR THE CRUEL TO BE KIND-HEARTED, A STINGY PERSON TO BE GENEROUS, A STUPID PERSON TO BE INTELLIGENT, A CRIMINAL TO BE SAINTLY, A DECEITFUL PERSON TO BE HONEST AND A LAZY ONE TO BE ENERGETIC IS THE REAL MIRACLE IN THE EYES OF THE BUDDHA.

How about bringing the dead back to life? Can the Buddha do that as well?



In the Buddhist scriptures, it is said that the Buddha could actually prolong his life if he chose to do so. It is also widely documented that many people could lengthen their lifespan by practising the Buddha's teaching. But, the Buddha never

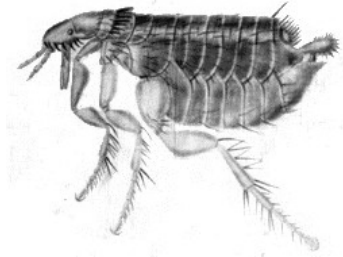
emphasise much on longevity and bringing someone dead back to life. The Buddha is far more long-sighted than that. To him,

DEATH IS JUST A TEMPORARY END TO A TEMPORARY
EXISTENCE & BETTER THAN A THOUSAND YEARS, IS ONE
DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PERSON WHO SEES
THE HIGHEST TRUTH.

The dead person will be reborn again. The more crucial thing to do at the moment of death is to help a person to acquire a good rebirth and guide him towards enlightenment. Only when enlightenment is attained, there is ultimate DEATHLESSNESS as they will be no more rebirth and death. In view of this, we never hear the Buddha used his psychic power to bring someone dead back to life. Even if He did, it is not considered as a real miracle from His point of view.

The following is a story of how the Buddha really brought someone 'dead back to life' or should I say 'hell back to heaven'. During the Buddha's time, a monk by the name of Tissa received a fine, beautiful robe that he cherished very much. He left the robe on the clothesline and thought, "I shall wear it tomorrow." However, that night he died of indigestion and was

reborn as a flea within the folds of his brand new robe. After his funeral, the Sangha convened to distribute his possessions. The indignant flea was running frantically within the robe, shouting, "These monks are robbing me of my property!"



The Buddha heard that with his Divine Ear and asked Venerable Ananda to postpone the distribution of the robe for seven days. On the eighth day, after the robe had been distributed, the monks wondered about the reason for the postponement. The Buddha said, "Because of his attachment to his new robe, Tissa was reborn as a flea. If you had distributed the robes sooner, its indignation would have caused another rebirth in hell. However, on the seventh day the flea died and was reborn in Tusita Heaven. So, I allowed you to distribute the robe on the eighth day".

This is how the Buddha skilfully and compassionately helps dying/dead people to progress spiritually in the cycle of birth and death. In another occasion, the Buddha even managed to guide a dying person close to enlightenment. According to the Sotapattisamyutta, the Buddha once visited the bedside of Dighayu, the

lay disciple who was terminally ill. The Master gave him spiritual counselling and not long after that he passed way. Later, the Buddha declared that Dighyu passed away as a non-returner (Anagami or 3rd stage of Sainthood). After death, he was reborn in the Pure Abodes (Suddhavasa), an environment reserved for Anagamis. There he attained enlightenment, became an Arahant and lived till the end of his life.

In conclusion, the Buddha can heal the sick but is not interested in bringing the dead back to life. He is more concern with ultimate freedom from death and miracle of education.

**MAY ALL OF US LIVE WELL
AND HAVE NO MORE DEATH!**



BUDDHISM, HEALTH & DISEASE

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Health and disease are among the common experience of human life that is the special concern of religion. Religion, in every society, in every stage of history, upholds the value of well-being and health as necessary for a meaningful life, and provides its adherents with ways and means to enhance their health and to enable them to deal creatively with human vulnerability to disease, pain and suffering. There is a consensus that health and well-being does not mean only or simply the absence of pain and suffering or the lack of disease, disability, defect and death, but has a positive meaning. There is much debate today over what this positive meaning is. This article is a short introduction to the Buddhist approach to health and disease. After all Buddhism has over 2,500 year history of involvement in medical

theory and practice. As a living religion its teachings have much influenced the ways Buddhists think and act in matters of life and death. Since health is a human value that all of us are concerned with, it is hoped that this introduction will serve as a Buddhist contribution to the ongoing discussion on how to define health and therefore the role and function of the modern health care professionals who represent and serve this crucial human value.

Buddhist worldview, dependent origination & kamma.

The Buddhist worldview is holistic and is primarily based on a belief in the interdependence of all phenomena and a correlation between mutually conditioning causes and effects. This belief is formulated by the principle of dependent origination, also referred to as the law of conditionality, the causal nexus that operates in all phenomena - physical, psychological, and moral. In the physical realm, for example, all things in the universe are intimately interrelated as causes and effects without beginning and end. And the world is an organically structured world where all of its parts are interdependent. Similarly in human society every component is interrelated. The same is also found in the psychophysical sphere, in which the mind and the body are

not separate units but an interdependent part of the overall human system (1).

The Buddhist worldview also comprises a belief in kamma, the correlation between deed and its subsequent consequences, as in the moral realm this principle of dependent origination operated by the name of the law of kamma stating the conditionality of this causal relation (2). This implies that the Buddhist law of kamma does not entail complete determinism. If such determinism were accepted there would be no possibility of the eradication of suffering. A man would ever be bad for it is his kamma to be bad. But this is not so and the effect of kamma can be mitigated not only in one life but even beyond, as, according to Buddhism, life is not limited to a single, individual existence. Present life is only a part of the round of existence (samsara) which stretches out across space and time. A single existence is conditioned by others proceeding it and in turn conditions one or a series of successive existences. Existence is thus at the same time and effect in one respect and a cause in another. This imprisonment in the round of existence is the result of one's own deeds (kamma), good or bad. Conditioned by deeds, the present form of existence can be changed or dissolved by deeds. This is possible

because the present is not the total effect of the past. It is simultaneously cause and effect. As an effect, we are conditioned by the causal matrix made up of the social and biological continuities of life themselves and thus are the effect of our past deed. What we are now is the result of what we have been before. But as a cause, we are the absolute master of our destiny. The present, though elusive, is the building block of the future. What we shall be depends on what we are and shall do, with our own choice.

Dependent origination, health & kamma.

Within this worldview, health and disease involve the overall state of a human being and are interwoven with many factors such as economics, education, social and cultural milieu. All these conditional factors need to be seriously taken into account in the understanding of health and disease. Health is therefore to be understood in terms of holism. It is the expression of harmony - within oneself, in one's social relationships, and in relation to the natural environment. To be concerned about a person's health means to be concerned with the whole person, his (her) physical and mental dimensions, social, familial, and work relationships, as well as the environment in which

he (she) lives and which acts on him (her). Therefore the tendency to understand health only in relation to particular parts of the human organism such as the defects is unacceptable to Buddhism. In the Buddhist holistic perspective, disease is the expression of the disturbed harmony in our life as a whole. By its physical symptoms, disease draws our attention to this disturbed harmony. Hence healing in Buddhism is not the mere treatment of these measurable symptoms. It is more an expression of the combined effort of the mind and the body to overcome disease than a fight between medicine and disease. Its real aim is to enable the patient to bring back harmony within himself and in his relationships with the others and the natural environment. In this context healing is not an end in itself, but rather a means by which medicine helps to serve the value of human health and well-being.

Apart from this holistic approach, Buddhism attributes kamma as an important contributing factor to health and disease. In the Buddhist perspective good health is the correlated effect of good kamma in the past and vice versa. This interpretation of health and disease in terms of kamma is to emphasize that there is a relationship between morality and health. Health depends on our life-styles, i.e. the way we

think, the way we feel, and the way we live. Illness is the consequence of an unhealthy life-style such as one characterized by sensual indulgence, for example. This is the normativistic component of the Buddhist perspective on health which involves the practice of moral and religious values such as compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness. This is the underlying reason why Buddhism advises those who want to be healthy to practise morality (sila), mental discipline (samadhi), and wisdom (panna), in the Noble Eightfold Path.

Perhaps we will understand the role of kamma in health and illness as we look at the following cases. For example, in the time of an epidemic there are usually some people who succumb while others escape even though both groups are exposed to the same conditions. According to the Buddhist view the difference between the former and latter is due to the nature of kamma of each in the past. Other examples are the cases where though the treatment given was successful the patient died, and where in spite of ineffective treatment the patient lived. There have also been cases of remarkable and unexpected recoveries when modern medicine has given up all hope for remission. Such cases strengthen the Buddhist belief that besides the physical cause of

disease, illness can be the effect of bad kamma in past lives. A disease with a kammic cause cannot be cured until that kammic result is exhausted. But the kamma of every person is a mystery both to himself and others. Hence no ordinary person can definitely know which disease is caused by kamma. Therefore one has to be careful in imputing kamma especially for disease because it may lead to a fatalistic attitude of not seeking any cure at all or giving up treatment out of despair. Buddhism advises us that for practical purposes we have to look upon all diseases as though they are produced by mere physical causes. And even if the disease has a kamma cause it should be treated. As no condition is permanent and as the causal relation between deed and its correlated consequence is more conditional than deterministic there is the possibility for the disease to be cured so long as life continues. On the other hand we cannot tell at what point the effect of bad kamma will be exhausted. Therefore we need to take advantage of whatever means of curing and treatment are available. Such treatment, even if it cannot produce a cure, is still useful because appropriate physical and psychological conditions are needed for the kammic effect to take place. The presence of a predisposition to certain diseases through past kamma and the physical condition to produce the disease will provide the

opportunity for the disease to arise. But having a certain treatment will prevent a bad kammic result manifesting fully. This kind of treatment does not interfere with the working of the individual kamma but reduces its severity. The advice of Buddhism to a person with an incurable disease is to be patient and to perform good deeds to mitigate the effects of the past bad kamma. At least the individual effort to maintain or recover is itself good kamma. The belief in kamma in relation to health and disease does not lead to fatalism, nor to pessimism. As mentioned before, the law of kamma does not rule with an iron hand or bring a curse. This law only stresses the causal relation between cause and effect. It does not entail complete determinism. To believe in kamma is to take personal responsibility for health. Health is not given. It has to be gained by one's own efforts, and one should not blame others for the suffering one is going through because of the disease. Besides, it may be a comfort to think that our illness is no fault of our present lives but the legacy of a far distant past, and that by our own attitudes and efforts towards illness good kammic effects can arise. The belief in kamma also enables us to cope with the painful aspects of life, for example suffering from terminal illness such as leukemia or a more malignant form of cancer with tranquility and without fruitless

struggle, nor negative and depressing mental states. Such acceptance will also enable us to overcome despair, endure the condition to the last days, and thus die a peaceful death.

The emphasis on the kammic cause of health and disease implies individual responsibility for health and illness. Kamma is created by choices we made in past lives. Health is to be gained by continuing personal efforts in this life. Good deeds (e.g. regular exercise, proper nutrition, etc.) lead to good health whereas bad deeds (e.g. poor living habits, abusing the body and the mind) in this and previous lives bring illness. The sense of responsibility is much needed in health care. At present, with the invention of "miracle drugs" and the development of new technologies, many people tend to have the illusion that all pain and suffering in life can be eliminated and that all suffering is bad, whether physical, mental, emotional, moral, or spiritual. And by blaming it on external forces people seek external means (e.g. pills, injection, therapies, etc.) of alleviating suffering rather than examining themselves and their own lives and seeking to change what it is within themselves that has resulted in illness. The Buddhist kamma view of health and disease, on the contrary, recognizes the reality of self-inflicted disease that can be traced to an

individual's own life-style and habits, and encourages one to seek also for the cause of our disease, pain, and suffering within oneself, e.g. in relation to one's own life-styles, decisions, attitudes, and relationships that must be changed. It also recognizes the positive role of disease and suffering in refining our spirit and in strengthening our moral character, e.g. courage, self-understanding, and sympathy towards others. However, the Buddhist emphasis on individual kamma or personal responsibility for health does not mean that Buddhism assigns personal responsibility for all illness. In the Buddhist view kamma has both individual and social dimensions. This latter component is what may be termed as social kamma which, in health care, refers to the environmental factors that could aggravate or mitigate and individual kamma. These factors such as socio-economic factors, e.g. unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, can act as the hazardous/supporting environment for health/illness of an individual. And society could hold employers and businesses responsible if they did not maintain a healthy environment for their workers or provide safety measures. This concept of social kamma also implies responsibility on the part of government to provide adequate health care services to all its citizens in proportion to their health needs and medical conditions.

The body and physical health.

In the Buddhist perspective the unique body of each of us, both in appearance and structure, is a result of our past kamma. The human body is at the same time the means by which we contact the world and the physical manifestation of our mind. Being such an important instrument, the body must be duly attended to, i.e. one must not abuse it through food, alcohol, drugs, or by taxing it with over-indulgence and deprivation. Even enlightenment, the highest goal of Buddhism, cannot be attained by the mortification of the body, as witnessed in the personal experience of the Buddha. This is due to the interdependency of the mind and the body. Intellectual illumination can be attained only when the body is not deprived of anything necessary for the healthy and efficient functioning of all bodily organs.

According to Buddhism, any life lived solely for self-seeking or self-indulgence is a life not worth living. Buddhism therefore encourages us to make use of the body for higher purposes, particularly for attaining the highest goal, nibbana, liberation from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth (samsara) as subjects of contemplation. Constant practice of morality and meditation will enable us to have self-control over the appetites, sensations, and egoistic drives.

Physical health is viewed by Buddhism as constituted by the normal functioning of the body and its organically interrelated organs. When one of them fails to function, debility and disease set in. The normal function of the body organs is the result of the harmony and equilibrium of the four primary elements in the body, i.e. earth (pathavi), water (apo), wind (vayo), and fire (tejo). If the balance is disturbed, the normal function is disrupted and a state of disease appears. Curing is the restoration of this balance, i.e. putting the entire physical being, and not just the pathologically afflicted part, into good condition. Since each part of the human body is organically related to all other parts, for good health the entire body must be in good condition. In view of the fact that the body, like all phenomena, is always in a state of change, decline, and decay, physical health cannot last long. It is impossible for the body to be perfectly healthy and free from all diseases at all times. Human life is vulnerable to disease at very stage. Disease is a reminder of human fragility. This implies that (complete) health is not a totally attainable state. Human wholeness or well-being, therefore, does not mean the absence of all pain and suffering in life, but learning to deal with pain and suffering, how to use it and transcend it for the sake of personal growth and sympathetic understanding of others.

The Buddhist understanding of physical disease in terms of the disturbance of the harmony and equilibrium in the body is different from the militaristic view of disease focused on the hostile germs. According to this view disease is caused by the attack of the hostile germs in the environment to a particular part of the body. These different views lead to different ways of curing. The Buddhist way is to bring harmony to the body where disharmony has taken place either by medicine or by the change in thought and way of living. Medicine is used to boost the body's self-healing power i.e. to be able to deal with the disease, to restore the balance in its own way. Healing is more an expression of the combined efforts of the mind and the body to overcome disease than a fighting between medicine and disease. On the contrary the other way is to fight back the germs with drugs which usually are chemical. The effectiveness of these drugs depends on their attacking power on the inflicted part and not on the restorative power as in the case of Buddhism.

The mind and mental health.

Physical health is important because Buddhism regards it to be the means to intellectual enlightenment. Buddhism does not want people to

spend a large part of their lives in poor health or else they will not be able to devote themselves to the highest purposes. Although Buddhism views the mind and the body in interdependence, its teaching gives special attention to the mind and its power. It is stated in the very first verse of the Dhammapada that what we are is the result of our thoughts. The source of our lives and hence of our happiness or unhappiness lies within our power. No one can harm us but ourselves. It is the kind of thought we entertain that improves our physical well-being or weakens it, and also ennobles us or degrades us. This is the reason why Buddhism designates thought as the cause of both physical and verbal actions with their kammic results and considers mental health of the utmost importance and the training of the mind to attain the highest stage of health as its sole concern. This preoccupation with mental health is also regarded as the true vocation of Buddhist monks. The training is based on the belief that both the body and the mind are prone to sickness. But since the mind is able to detach itself from the body it is possible to have a healthy mind within a sick body.

According to Buddhism for the mind to be healthy, first it is necessary to develop a correct view of the world and ourselves, i.e. a realistic acceptance of the

three traits of existence: impermanence, insubstantiality, and suffering of unsatisfactoriness. The adoption of the wrong views makes us see the transitory as permanent, the painful as happy, the impure as pure, and what is not-self as self. Consequently we crave and struggle for what is not something that does not seem to change, e.g. the illusory permanent and identical self and the permanent object of desire -and we always suffer disappointment. By accepting thing as they reality nothing more than a name for the complex of psycho-physical elements (nama-rupa) - the mind no longer strives for the satisfaction of self-seeking impulses nor clings to objects. As a result the mind is at rest and thereby psychological suffering is eliminated leading to improved mental health.

Apart from changing our thought by the adoption of this correct view and by developing an attitude of detachment towards the world and ourselves, our mental health is dependent on our power to rein in our appetites and to restrain and/or eradicate negative motions much as greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), anger (moha), and our possessive and aggressive tendencies. All these unwholesome states can act as the cause of mental and physical illness. Such control can be achieved through the practice of morality and

meditation. Every set of Buddhist precepts and every type of meditation are aimed at controlling the senses, impulses, and instincts and easing the tension and eliminating the unwholesomeness of thoughts that tend to make the mind sick.

Buddhist meditation is not only a means to cure the mind from its ailments caused by incorrect views, self-indulgence, hatred, and anger of all forms, but is also devised as a means to induce positive wholesome mental states, particularly the four sublime states: loving kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekha). Loving kindness enables us to love and be kind to one another while compassion wants us to help those in distress. Sympathetic joy is an ability to rejoice in the joy of others and equanimity is the equanimous temperament without being either elated or dejected in the face of the vicissitudes of life - gain and loss, fame and lack of fame, praise and blame, happiness and sorrow. The continual cultivation of these wholesome mental states is an important Buddhist way of making the mind healthy. Actions spring from this healthy mind are always good and wholesome and thus conductive to our holistic health. This over-all health is reflected in all aspects of life including thinking, speaking, living and doing.

Concluding Remarks.

The Buddhist concept of health and disease is formulated within the context of the principle of Dependent Origination and its related law of kamma. Accordingly health and disease are to be understood holistically in their over-all state in relation to the whole system and environmental conditions-social, economic, and cultural.

This view is diametrically opposite to the analytic view which tends to dissect human beings into different segments both in the physical and mental realms. As a result health is defined too narrowly as the mere absence of measurable symptoms of disease. Doctors and other medical personnel who hold such view direct their attention to particular parts of a person when considering whether or not a person is healthy and have not been concerned enough with their patients as whole human beings, reducing their care of them to the quantifiable control of physical symptoms. The Buddhist holistic perspective, on the contrary, focuses on the whole person and argues that since human beings are not merely physical creatures but mental, emotional, social and spiritual beings as well and that, as a psychosomatic unity, bodily illness affects the mind and emotions and emotional, mental and social maladjustments can affect the body, then

to be concerned about a person's health one must be concerned about his entire person, body, mind and emotions, as well as his social environment. This may seem an utopian goal that medicine or health care services alone cannot accomplish. But it should be thought of and striven for perhaps this overall health could be made possible only through the concerted efforts of medicine, the individual and social agencies concerned.

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Notes:

(1) The most detailed and coherent systematic exposition of the principle of Dependent Origination is given in *Visuddhi Magga: The Path of Purification*.

(2) This law is also referred to as the law of causality according to which a deed is likened to a seed which will sooner or later result in certain fruits.

SPIRITUAL VACCINATION

In the Anagata-bhayani Sutta, the Buddha says that we should appreciate the opportunity to practice the Dharma well when we are relatively healthy. Only then we are able to cope well when we eventually fall sick one day, which is inevitable.

The monk reminds himself of this: "At present I am free from illness & discomfort, endowed with good digestion: not too cold, not too hot, of medium strength & tolerance. The time will come, though, when this body is beset with illness. When one is overcome with illness, it is not easy to pay attention to the Buddha's teachings. It is not easy to reside in isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. Before this unwelcome, disagreeable, displeasing thing happens, let me first make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized, so that, endowed with that Dharma, I will live in peace even when ill".



5 HEALTHY REFLECTIONS

The Buddha says that there are 5 things that we should constantly reflect on everyday:

- OLD AGE
- SICKNESS
- DEATH
- IMPERMANENCE
- LAW OF KARMA



I usually do this skilful reflection when I'm bathing.

When we frequently bring the 1st four subjects (old age, sickness, death and impermanence) into our consciousness, we are actually mentally preparing ourselves to welcome the major adversities in life. By doing so, we would be able to confront them with less mental distress when they eventually strike us. This is sort of a 'psychological vaccination' for mental health!

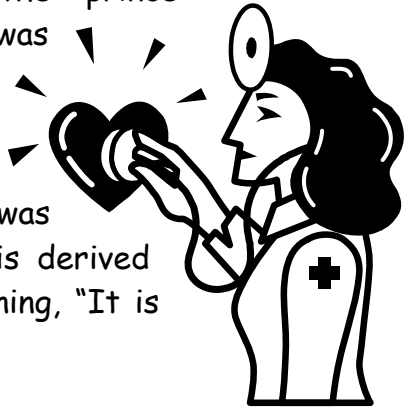
As for the 5th reflection, it reminds me to continuously put in effort (karma) to do things that promote good health e.g. adequate rest, physical

exercise, proper nutrition, regular medical check-up etc. The Buddha says that, "HEALTH IS THE HIGHEST GAIN". It means that health is something very precious and has to be gained. It's not a free gift. Therefore, we must work hard and plant the favourable conditions that lead to good health.

"I HAVE NOT CONQUERED
OLD AGE, SICKNESS & DEATH!
THEREFORE, I SHOULD PRACTISE
THE DHARMA DILIGENTLY FOR
ULTIMATE LIBERATION."

THE STORY OF JIVAKA - THE BUDDHA'S DOCTOR

Jivaka was the celebrated doctor during the Buddha's time in India. Immediately after his birth, Jivaka was placed in a wooden box and thrown away by his mother, a courtesan on a rubbish heap beside the road. That morning, Prince Abhaya, a son of King Bimbisara happened to pass that way as he was going to the palace. When the prince discovered that the baby was alive, he was moved by compassion and ordered it to be brought up as his adopted son. The baby was also named Jivaka which is derived from the word Jivati meaning, "It is still alive".



When he grew up, Jivaka studied medicine at Taxila for seven years under a famous teacher by the name Aatreya who was the best surgeon at that time. Jivaka later developed a specialised technique of brain surgery focusing on removing parasitic worms or insects that caused severe health problems inside the skull. Soon, his unusual skill as a physician and surgeon

became widely known. He was called upon to treat kings and princess including King Bimbisara himself for fistula and was appointed as the royal physician. But, of all the distinguished people Jivaka attended to, his greatest pleasure was to attend to the Buddha which he did three times a day.

When the Buddha's foot was wounded by a splinter from a rock thrown by Devadatta, it was Jivaka who healed Him. The injury was said to be quite serious and required some form of surgery because a blood clot had to be removed. Apparently, anaesthesia and X-Ray procedures were already in practice during the Buddha's time more than 2500 years ago. Jivaka used a certain local gemstone as crude X-Ray to reflect the internal physical parts of the human body. As for anaesthesia, a mixture of various alcoholic preparations was used.

One of the most amazing surgical feat to Jivaka's credit is the one in which he assumed an obstetrician role and delivered a child from its mother's womb while she was being cremated. The child to be born had survived the mother who was being cremated when Jivaka found the child to be alive.

Jivaka was a great lay disciple of the Buddha. Realizing the advantages of having a monastery close to his house, Jivaka built one in his mango garden. He invited the Buddha and His disciples to the monastery, offered alms and donated the monastery to the Buddha and the monks. After the blessing ceremony of the monastery, he attained the first stage of Sainthood (Sotapana).

It was Jivaka who persuaded King Ajatasattu to visit the Buddha after his parricide for spiritual counselling and transformation. It was also at Jivaka's request that the Buddha advised his disciples to take up physical exercises. There is one sutta named after him - Jivaka Sutta. It talks about the qualities of a virtuous lay follower of the Buddha who practises for his own benefits and the benefits of others.

One one occasion during the Buddha's residence at the Jetavana monastery when he conferred titles to distinguished lay disciples in accordance with their merit, the Buddha declared, "Bhikkhus, among my lay disciples who have personal devotion, Jivaka, the adopted son of Prince Abhaya is the foremost".

MAY A MONK ACT AS A DOCTOR?

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

A recurring misunderstanding standing among some lay Buddhist is that a monk may practise as a doctor to the laity. Some monks do become skilled in herbal medicine and other traditional therapies but when, if ever, are they allowed by their precepts to behave as a doctor?

The Lord Buddha once said "Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick" and this well-known saying has often been used to justify a monk acting as a doctor.



However, the saying is taken out of context as will soon be clear. The full passage, found in that section of the Vinaya-pitaka called the Mahavagga, chapter 8, verse 26, relates to the story of the Lord Buddha coming across a fellow monk who was suffering dysentery. With the help of Venerable Ananda, the Lord Buddha cleaned and settled the sick monk. Shortly afterwards, the Lord Buddha addressed the Sangha:

"Monks, you have not a mother, you have not a father who might tend you. If you, monks, do not tend one another, then who is there to tend you? Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick." (From the Pali Text Society's translation, Book of the Discipline, Vol 4 p 432)

The full passage makes it abundantly clear that when the Lord Buddha said "Whoever would tend me should tend the sick", His meaning was for monks to look after fellow monks who were sick. He was not referring to monks acting as doctors to the laity.

In fact, the Lord Buddha said several times that acting as a doctor to lay people is, for a monk, Wrong Livelihood (miccha-ajiva) directly contrary to the fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path and a Debased Art (tiracchana-vijja). For example, in the very first Sutta in the first collection of Suttas, being the Brahmajala Sutta of the Digha Nikaya, the Lord Buddha said:

"Whereas some recluses and brahmins while living on the food offered by the faithful, earn their living by a wrong means of livelihood (miccha-ajiva), by such debased arts (tiracchana-vijja) as: promising gifts to deities in return for favours; fulfilling such promises; demonology; reciting spells after entering an earthen

house; inducing virility and impotence; preparing and consecrating sites for a house; giving ceremonial mouthwashes and bathing; offering sacrificial fires; administering emetics, purgatives, expectorants and phlegmagogues; administering ear medicine, eye medicine, nose medicine, collyrium and counter ointments; curing cataracts, practising surgery, practising as a children's doctor; administering medicines to cure bodily diseases and balms to counter their after effects -- the recluse Gotama (the Lord Buddha) abstains from such wrong means of livelihood, from such debased arts." (From The Discourse on the All-Embracing Net Views , p 61, being the Buddhist Publication Society of Kandy's English edition of the Brahmajala Sutta)

Thus the Lord Buddha clearly condemned any monk who makes his living by behaving as a doctor to the laity.

The tradition that has come down to all Theravada Buddhist monks is that described in the Samantapasadika, the great commentary on the Vinayapitaka compiled by Buddhaghosa in Sri Lanka in the 5th century C.E. This authoritative work states that a monk may prescribe and supply medicines to his fellow monastics (monks and nuns), to his parents or

to those looking after his parents, and to any lay people staying in the monastery or vihara either preparing to go forth as monks or just staying to help the monks. Also, a monk may prescribe but not buy medicines to his brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents and to whatever travelers, bandits, people wounded in battle and those without relatives who come to the monastery or vihara for emergency help. Should a monk prescribe or supply medicines beyond his allowance, he commits an offence against his precepts (a dukkata offence). Further, if he prescribes or supplies a medicine to a layperson for a material gift in return, then he incurs another offence against his precepts for "corrupting families" (kuladusaka). That is what is stated in the *Samantapasadika Vinaya Commentary*, respected in all Theravada Buddhist countries. The passage may be found in the Pali Text Society's edition of the *Samantapasadika* page 469f (unfortunately this work is in Pali and no English translation is available yet).

This answer from the authoritative texts to the question "May a monk act as a doctor?" shows a wise balance which recognises a monk's duty to his parents, his responsibilities to those monks and lay people staying with him in his monastery, and his compassion to all those visiting his monastery for emergency help.

It prevents in any circumstances receiving any material reward for such services. Moreover, it remembers that THE ROLE OF A BUDDHIST MONK TOWARDS THE LAITY IS NOT TO ACT AS A DOCTOR TO THE BODY BUT TO ACT AS A KIND SAGE, A DOCTOR TO THE MIND.

Chapter 2



KARMIC EFFECT

MORALITY & DISEASE



THE WISE MAINTAIN THAT IT IS THE WIDESPREAD LOSS OF MORALITY AMONG MEN AND WOMEN TODAY THAT HAS CAUSED SO MANY STRANGE AND NEW DISEASE TO APPEAR.

-Sayadaw Tabyekan-

HEALTH, LONGEVITY & BEAUTY

Perplexed by the seemingly inexplicable, apparent disparity that exists amongst humanity, a young truth-seeker named Subha approached the Buddha, questioned Him about it and was given the following answer.

If a person is in the habit of harming others with fist or clod, with cudgel or sword, he, as a result of his harmfulness, when born amongst mankind, will suffer from various **DISEASES**.



If a person is not in the habit of harming others, he as a result of his harmlessness, when born amongst mankind, will enjoy **GOOD HEALTH**.

If a person destroys life, is a hunter, besmears his hand with blood, is engaged in killing and wounding, and is not merciful towards living beings, he, as a result of his killing, when born amongst mankind, will be **SHORT-LIVED**.

If a person avoids killing, leaves aside cudgel and weapon, and is merciful and compassionate towards all

living beings, he, as a result of his non-killing, when born amongst mankind, will be **LONG-LIVED**.

If a person is wrathful and turbulent, is irritated by trivial word, gives vent to anger, ill-will and resentment, he, as a result of his irritability, when born amongst mankind, will become **UGLY**.

If a person is not wrathful and turbulent, is not irritated even by a torrent abuse, does not give vent to anger, ill-will and resentment, he, as a result of his amiability, when born amongst mankind, will be **BEAUTIFUL....**

SAVING ANTS, LONGER LIFE

On one occasion, there was an old monk who through diligent practice had attained special power that enables him to foresee the future. He had a young novice who was about eight years old. One day, the monk looked at the boy's face and saw there that he would die within 7 days. Saddened by this, he told the boy to take a holiday and go and visit his parents. "Take your time. Don't hurry back", said the monk. For he felt that the boy should be with his family when he died.



Seven days later, to his astonishment, the monk saw the boy walking back up the mountain. When he arrived he looked intently at his face and saw that the boy would now live to a ripe old age. "Tell me everything that happened while you were away", said the monk. So, the boy started to tell of his journey down from the mountain. He told of villagers and towns he passed through, of rivers forded and mountains climbed. Then he told how one day he came upon a stream in flood. He noticed, as he tried to pick his way across the flowing stream, that a colony of

ants had become trapped on a small island formed by the flooding stream. Moved by compassion for these poor creatures, he took a branch of a tree and laid it across the stream until it touched the little island. As the ants made their way across, the boy held the branch steady, until he was sure all the ants had escaped to dry land. Then he went on his way. "I see", thought the old monk to himself", that is why his age has been lengthened".

This story illustrates to us that the power of goodness can prolong one's life, in accordance with the Law of Karma.

BLIND MONK

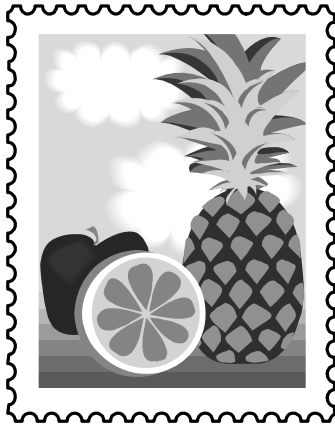
On one occasion, there was a monk by the name Cakkhupala who came to pay homage to the Buddha at the Jetavana Monastery. One night, while pacing up and down in meditation, the monk accidentally stepped on some insects. In the morning, some monks visiting the blind monk found the dead insects.



They thought ill of the monk and reported the matter to the Buddha. The Buddha asked them whether they had seen the monk killing the insects. When they answered in the negative, the Buddha said, "Just as you had not seen him killing, so also he had not seen those living insects. Besides, as the monk already attained arahantship, he could have no intention of killing, so he was innocent." On being asked why Cakkhupala was blind although he was an arahant, the Buddha told the following story.

Cakkhupala was a physician in one of his past existences. Once, he had deliberately made a woman patient blind. That woman had promised to become his slave, together with her children, if her eyes were completely cured. Fearing that she and her children would have to become slaves, she lied to the physician.

She told him that her eyes were getting worse when, in fact, they were perfectly cured. The physician knew she was deceiving him. So, in revenge, he gave her another ointment, which made her totally blind. As a result of this evil deed the physician lost his eyesight many times in his later existences.



EVEN AN EVIL-DOER SEES GOOD
AS LONG AS EVIL RIPENS NOT
BUT WHEN IT BEARS FRUIT,
THEN HE SEES THE EVIL RESULTS
-Dhammapada-

LEPROSY

On one occasion, Venerable Anuruddha visited Kapilavatthu. While he was staying at the monastery there, all his relatives, with the exception of his sister Rohini, came to see him. On learning from them that Rohini did not come because she was suffering from leprosy, he sent for her. Covering her heads in shame, Rohini came when she was sent for. Venerable Anuruddha told her to do some meritorious deed and he suggested that she should sell some of her clothing and jewellery and with the money raised, to build a refectory for the monks. Rohini agreed to do so as she was told. Venerable Anuruddha also asked his other relatives to help in the construction of the hall. Further, he told Rohini to sweep the floor and fill the water pots every day even while the construction was still going on. She did as she was instructed and she began to get better.



When the hall was completed, the Buddha and his monks were invited for alms-food. After the meal, the Buddha asked for the donor of the building and alms-food, but Rohini was not there. So the Buddha sent for her and she came. The

Buddha asked her whether she knew why she was inflicted with this dreaded disease and she answered that she did not know. So, the Buddha told her that she had the dreadful disease because of an evil deed she had done out of spite and anger, in one of her past existence. As explained by the Buddha, Rohini was at one time, the chief queen of the king of Baranasi. It so happened that the king had a favourite dancer and the chief queen was very jealous of her. So, the queen wanted to punish the dancer. Thus, one day, she had her attendants put some itching powder on the dancer's bed and blankets. Next, they called the dancer, and as though in jest, they threw some itching powder on her. The girl itched all over and was in great pain and discomfort. Thus itching unbearably, she ran to her room and her bed, which made her suffered even more. As a result of that evil deed, Rohini had become a leper in this existence.

THE POWER OF GOOD DEEDS

In the earlier page, we have seen that the power of goodness can prolong one's life in accordance with the Law of Karma. But, can the power of goodness of a person help to prolong another person e.g. family member's life?



This story from the Majjhima Nikaya Atthakatha will shed some light on this question. Once, there was a mother who was critically ill and she needed rabbit meat as a cure. The filial son, finding that rabbit meat was not available in the open market, went in search of a rabbit. He caught one but was loathe to kill the rabbit even for the sake of his own mother. He finally let the rabbit go but wished his mother well. Simultaneously with this wish, the power of the son's moral virtue brought about the mother's recovery.

The above story seems to suggest that one can help another sick person by tapping on the power of one's goodness. Well, this is not surprising at all since the power of spiritual Truth can do wonders in healing as in Paritta Chanting. The positive energy derived from

one's good deeds or aspiration to perform good deeds can actually be dedicated to another person to facilitate healing. Of course, it is even better if the sick person can participate in the good deeds by himself. He would then be able to benefit directly from the power of his own meritorious actions.

By the power of the merits accrued from the compilation of this book, may we all be healthy and happy!



Husband: In order for your mouth ulcer to heal faster, I suggest that you make an aspiration to restrain yourself from scolding people for 1 week.

Wife: OK! As long as I don't get to see you.

4 BENEFITS OF FOOD OFFERING

- Angutara Nikaya -



♥ LONG LIFE

♥ BEAUTY

♥ STRENGTH

♥ HAPPINESS

BEAUTY TIPS FROM QUEEN MALLIKA



Once when the Buddha was staying in the Jetavana Monastery at Savatthi, Queen Mallika approached the Buddha, greeted Him and asked the following question:



"Reverend Sir, what is the cause when a woman is ugly, poor and low in the social scale? What is the cause when a woman is ugly, but is rich and high in the social scale? What is the cause when a woman is beautiful, but is poor and low in social scale? What is the cause when a woman is beautiful, rich and high in the social scale?"

The Blessed one replied:

"Mallika, when a woman has been of quick temper, violent and become angry and spiteful at every little thing said against her; when she is stingy and has not given alms to monks or holy men and has always been envious at the gains and honour of others; then, when she dies and is reborn, she will be ugly, poor and low in the social scale".

"Mallika, when a woman has been of quick temper, violent and become angry and spiteful at every little thing said against her; but she is generous and gives alms to monks or holy men and has not been envious at the gains and honour of others; then, when she dies and is reborn, she will be ugly but rich and high in social scale".

"Mallika, when a woman has not been of quick temper, not violent and has not become angry and spiteful at every little thing though much had been said against her; but she is stingy and has not given alms to monks or holy men and has always been envious at the gains and honour of others; then, when she dies and is reborn, she will be beautiful but poor and low in social scale".

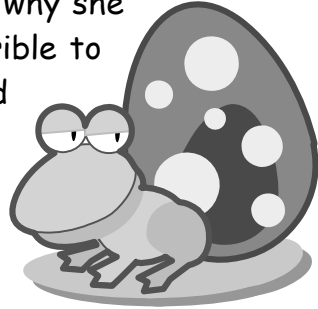
"Mallika, when a woman has not been of quick temper, not violent and has not become angry and spiteful at every little thing though much had been said against her; when she is generous and gives alms to monks or holy men and has not been envious at the gains and honour of others; then, when she dies and is reborn, she will be beautiful, rich and high in social scale".

"These, Mallika are the reasons why some are beautiful, while some are ugly; why some are rich and

high in social scale, while others are poor and low in social scale."

Thus, Queen Mallika understood why she was ugly, of bad figure and horrible to look at, but yet she was rich and high in social scale.

Which type of woman would you like to be?

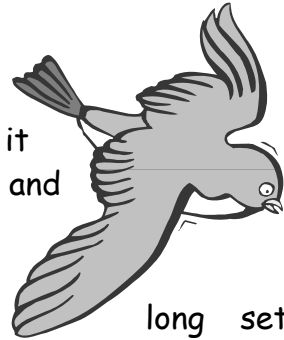


FREEING CAPTURED BIRDS CRITICIZED!

By Chiu Yu-Tzu, TAIPEI TIMES Staff Reporter

3rd November, 2004

CRUEL PRACTICE: The custom of setting birds free to improve one's karma is well-intended. But it has led to the rise of a brutal and inhumane bird catching business.



Taoist and Buddhist groups have long set birds and other animals free in the belief that it will garner good karma. But in Taiwan, the practice has become so commercialized that it leads to the unnecessary suffering and death of about 600,000 birds each year, animal rights activists said yesterday.

In the last two years, volunteers and activists from both the Environment and Animal Society of Taiwan and the Kaohsiung Teachers Association's Ecological Education Center have visited 155 shops selling birds in the Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung areas. They found that 60 percent them sold captured birds to religious groups, who convince their followers that

they can eliminate their bad karma by taking part in freeing the birds.

At a press conference held yesterday in Taipei, a documentary showing the brutal capture of such birds and their delivery to shops was shown to the media.

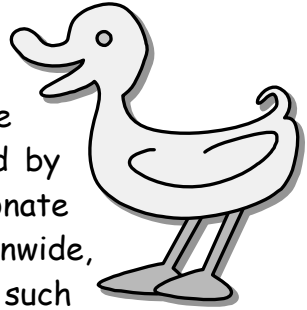
Wild birds were captured by nets set up in fields. Some birds were fried in the sun or starved to death because the bird catchers did not check their nets frequently.

The documentary also showed birds being lured by bait covered with a huge net. Birds struggled after getting stuck, and some died in the net. Those who survive must endure long-distance transportation to places where they're sold. The film showed birds being packed like sardines into regular boxes and shipped by train to customers, who are usually temple leaders.

Activists said that the types of captured birds vary. They have found shops selling turtledoves, Chinese bulbuls, scaly-breasted munias, Japanese white-eyes, sparrows, manikins, and pigeons at prices between NT\$10 and NT\$300 each.

More expensive birds such as skylark and imported large parrot, are available for NT\$1,000 to NT\$6,000. And even some protected species, such as Mikado pheasants, Hwamei and lovebirds are sold, at still higher prices.

Activists estimate that only 10 percent of captured birds are actually lucky enough to be freed by religious followers, who usually donate money to event organizers. Nationwide, about 500 religious groups hold such activities.



"We don't blame blind followers, but instead some crafty religious leaders," EAST president Wu Hung said. "Followers are not aware that their religious bird-freeing is part of a commercialized activity that involves bird-catching and selling."

Wu Hung said disregarding the birds' lives showed no sympathy for animals, and that such activities jeopardize the nation's ecological balance. There is also a potential health risk.

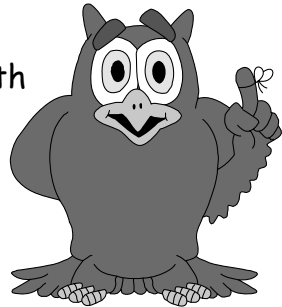
"Mixing diverse bird types during transportation increases the risk of epidemics such as bird flu," Wu Hung said.

Bird conservationists said that wild birds, once captured, are much more likely to die than pet birds because wild birds are easily scared and often refuse to be fed.

Meanwhile, the Legislative Yuan yesterday passed the first reading of a proposal to revise Article 10 of the Animal Protection Law that would add a prohibition on freeing captured animals.

"The relationship between demand and supply has been commercially established by dishonest animal catchers, dealers and purchasers," Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Lu Po-chi who initiated the proposal, said yesterday.

Lu said he would soon work with other legislators to have the revision passed in order to prevent the practice, which though benign in intent has spawned a cruel business.



Author: This does not mean that we should not save and release animals. But, we should exercise caution to do it in a proper way with WISDOM and COMPASSION.

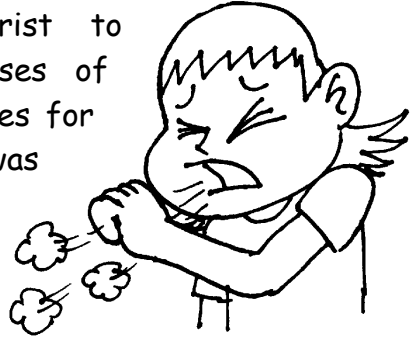
PAST LIFE REGRESSION THERAPY

One of the greatest discoveries of the Buddha is that there is rebirth and more than one life. Scientist e.g. Professor Dr. Ian Stevenson have for the past three decades accumulated a lot of evidence to support the Buddha's discovery. Many psychotherapists nowadays are helping patients in a more holistic way, keeping in view that there is more than one life. One of the distinguished ones is Dr. Brian Weiss, Chairman Emeritus of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai Medical Centre in Miami. He does past life regression therapy to help patients heal physically and mentally. By helping his patients to access their past lives through hypnosis, he enables them to LET GO and resolve past life conflicts that still haunt them until now. The following story is from his book, "Through Time Into Healing", that contains numerous case histories illustrating the healing potential of past life regression therapy.



Once, there was a case involving a lady who had chronic cough for no apparent reasons and not

responding to any treatment. In medicine, once you have been seen by all sorts of specialist and your symptom persists, you will be referred to a Psychiatrist to identify psychological causes of the symptom. The same goes for this case. The patient was regressed to her childhood and around birth but nothing seemed to affect her symptom.



One day, Dr. Brian got tired and told her, "Go back to the origin of your disease". And this lady went back 4000 years to her past life and described a situation whereby she was stabbed on her throat to death. After the emotional recall, she got better and with subsequent past life regressions, she was completely cured.

THE TEARS WE HAVE SHED
IN SAMSARA CAN FILL UP
THE ENTIRE OCEAN

-Buddha-

8 CAUSES OF SICKNESS

-Samyutta Nikaya-



- ♥ BILE
- ♥ PHLEGM
- ♥ WIND
- ♥ UNION OF BODY HUMOURS
 - ♥ SEASONAL CHANGES
 - ♥ UNPLESANT SURPRISES
- ♥ SUDDEN ATTACK FROM WITHOUT
 - ♥ KARMA

It is important to note that NOT all diseases are due to Karma. There are four other natural universal laws (Niyamas) that interact with the Law of Karma in disease causation:

1. Utu Niyama (Physical inorganic order) e.g. seasonal phenomena of winds and rains.
2. Bija Niyama (Physical organic order) e.g. scientific theory of cells and genes.
3. Dharma Niyama (Order of norm) e.g. gravitation and other laws of physics.
4. Citta Niyama (Order of mind or psychic law) e.g. processes of consciousness, telepathy, clairvoyance and psychic power.

It is equally important to note that there is no lawgiver e.g. God that governs the above mentioned laws. From a Buddhist perspective, disease arises not because of intervention from God. It arises depending on conditions. It only arises when the conditions are RIFE! Therefore, we can prevent disease by interfering with some of the disease causing conditions e.g. quit smoking.

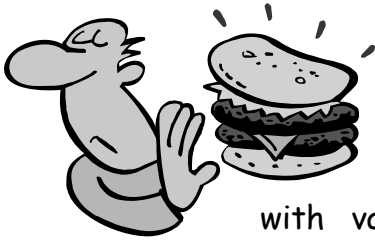
Chapter 3



HEALTHY EATING

DON'T OVER-EAT!

Once day, King Pasenadi of Kosala was complaining to the Buddha that he always felt very sleepy and uncomfortable after taking his meals. Buddha subsequently advised him to be moderate and contented in his food intake. After listening to the Buddha's advice, King Pasenadi became much more comfortable, energetic, healthy and happy.



DON'T OVER-EAT! It gives rise to bodily discomfort, lack of energy and vitality, and obesity that is associated with various medical problems e.g. diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, gout, infertility, poor self-image with depression etc.

We should recite this short prayer as a reminder before any of our meals:

"I TAKE THIS FOOD WITH **GRATITUDE** &
CAREFULLY CONSIDERING IT, NOT FOR BEAUTY OR
PLEASURE, BUT JUST FOR THE **SUSTENANCE** OF
THIS BODY TO SEEK THE **TRUTH**"

RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF FASTING

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Many people in the world face untimely death owing to over-eating.



In Buddhism, fasting is recognized as one of the methods for practicing self-control. The Buddha advised monks not to take solid food after noon. Lay people who observe the Eight Precepts on full moon days also abstain from taking any solid food after noon.

Critics sometimes regard these practices as religious fads. To understanding people, they are not religious fads but practices based on a moral and psychological insight.

In Buddhism, fasting is an initial stage of self-discipline to acquire self-control. In every religion, there is a system of fasting. By fasting and sacrificing a meal once a day or for any period, we can contribute our food to those who are starving or who

do not even have one proper meal each day.

'A man who eats too much', writes Leo Tolstoy 'cannot strive against laziness, while a gluttonous and idle man will never be able to contend with sexual lust. Therefore, according to all moral teachings, the effort towards self-control commences with a struggle against the lust of gluttony—commences with fasting just as the first condition of a good life is self-control, so the first condition of a life of self-control is fasting.'

Sages in various countries who practise self-control began with a system of regulated fasting and succeeded in attaining unbelievable heights of spirituality. An ascetic was kicked and tortured, and then his hands and feet were severed on the orders of a rakish king. But the ascetic, according to the Buddhist story, endured the torture with equanimity and without the slightest anger or hatred. Such religious people have developed their mental energy through restraining sensual indulgence which we crave for.

EATING WISELY

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

Some of my friends enjoy dining out. Some evenings they go to very expensive restaurants, where they are prepared to spend a lot of money on exquisite food. However, they waste the experience by neglecting the taste of the food and concentrate on the conversation they are having with their partner.

Who would talk during a concert given by a great orchestra? Chatter would hinder your enjoyment of the beautiful music, and would probably get you thrown out. Even when watching a great movie, we have been distracted. So, why do people engage in chit chat when they dine out?

If the restaurant is mediocre, then it may be a good idea to start a conversation to take your mind off the insipid meal. But, when the food is really delicious and very costly, telling your partner to be quiet so you can get your full money's worth is eating wisely.

Even when we do eat in silence, we often fail to savour the moment. Instead, while we are chewing on one piece of food, our attention is distracted as we look

at our plate to choose the next thing on our fork. Some are even two or three forkfuls ahead of themselves - one forkful in the mouth, one is waiting on the fork, another is heaped up waiting on the plate, while the mind contemplates the morsel coming third on the fork.

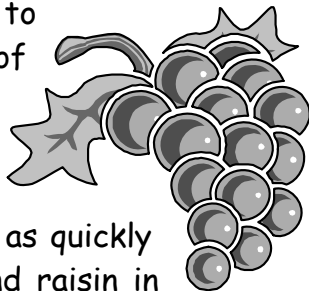
In order to relish the taste of your food and know life in its fullness, we should often savour one moment at a time in silence. Then we might get our money's worth in the five-star restaurant called life.



Have a NICE meal!

MINDFUL EATING

This is a little experiment to demonstrate the importance of mindful eating. Firstly, take two raisins in your hand. Take the first raisin and throw it into your mouth. Chew and swallow it as quickly as you can. Now, take the second raisin in your fingers slowly. Look at it carefully, the shades of colours and the folds. Feel the pressure of your fingers against the sticky skin and smell it. Close your eyes and very slowly bring the raisin into your mouth and begin to chew it very slowly. While you are chewing, pretend that you are an alien just arriving on earth, discovering this object for the first time. Like a scientist with an electron microscope, bring your full awareness into the raising-chewing experience. Feel the saliva, texture and smallest particle of sensation on your tongue before little by little swallowing it. Finally, take a deep breath.



How do the two experiences differ? You will surely find that in the second way of eating, the raisin tasted much better. This is how a Buddhist should eat, with mindfulness. Eating this way enables us to fully enjoy whatever food we are taking, from the

very first to the last bite. Food becomes tastier and we can become easily satisfied and fulfilled. This prevents us from overeating and we don't have to constantly look for new variety of food. Besides that, it's also been kind to our digestive system and improves digestion.

IT TAKES ABOUT 15 MINUTES
BEFORE OUR BRAIN STARTS TO
REALISE THAT OUR STOMACH IS FULL!
THEREFORE, EAT SLOWLY & MINDFULLY.

FOOD FOR THE BODY
FOOD FOR THE MIND



Dieticians emphasize a lot on the importance of proper food and nutrition for a fit and health body. The Buddha's view on food and nutrition is more holistic. According to Him, there is food for the body and also food for the mind. It is a simple but often neglected concept. For a healthy body, we need healthy food. This is straightforward. As for a healthy mind, we need healthy food as well but in the form of wholesome and positive thoughts. Therefore, when I take my meals, I'll make sure I remember to recite the following 'Buddha's menu',

**"AS I FEED MY PHYSICAL BODY WITH
MATERIAL FOOD, MAY I NOT FORGET OR
SLACKEN IN MY EFFORT TO FEED MY
MIND WITH THE FOOD OF DHARMA"**

This will nourish my mind and continuously remind me to cultivate Right Thought of loving kindness,

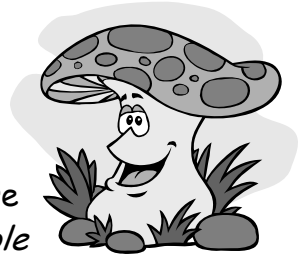
generosity and letting go. I would hereby recommend you to read this wonderful book by Venerable Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda entitled, "Food For The Thinking Mind". I wish you a voracious appetite.



THE MOST COMMON SICKNESS
THAT WE ALL HAVE IS
HUNGER! - FOR
PHYSICAL & MENTAL FOOD

BUDDHIST RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

Don Brown, Spiritual Director,
Kadampa Tibetan Buddhist Centre



The key teachings of Buddhism can be reduced to what are popularly called the *Four Noble Truths*, or *Four Truths Seen by Highly Realized Beings*. These are:

- 1) The truth of suffering: as long as we are enslaved by our belief in superficial reality or *Maya*, nothing in our life will bring satisfaction.
- 2) The truth of the cause of suffering: the principle cause of suffering is ignorance that misperceives reality. Awareness of the ultimate reality (seeing the truth that exists beyond our egocentric projections) makes it impossible for delusions like anger and clinging attachment to arise and the process of negative *Karma* (immutable law of cause and effect) to be activated.
- 3) The truth of the cessation of suffering: because suffering has identifiable causes it can be stopped by stopping those causes.

4) The path to the cessation of suffering: there are *Three Principal Paths to Enlightenment*: renunciation of suffering and its causes (determination to be free), *Bodhicitta* (altruistic intention to awaken for the benefit of all), and the wisdom of realizing emptiness (ultimate truth). As in curing any ailment, first we must recognize that we have a problem (1st Truth), then we try to ascertain its causes (2nd Truth), and when we learn that it can be cured (3rd Truth), we seek to find and take the appropriate medicine or cure (4th Truth).

Vegetarian Specials

The Buddha invites us to recognize and relate to the suffering in the world as if it is that suffering is one's own. Although our natural instinct is to feel that we are independent and somehow the universe revolves around us, we in fact greatly depend on each other. This leads to one of the essential ingredients to the Buddhist recipe for happiness: dedicate your life to awakening to your full potential for joy, compassion, and wisdom, solely to be of the greatest benefit for others. If you want happiness, cherish others.

Two branches of Buddhism are the *hinayana* ("individual vehicle") and *mahayana* ("universal vehicle"). Both have similar goals, but different motivations. In hinayana practice, the motivation is for self-liberation through self-realization. Mahayana practice, on the other hand, stresses interdependence and the motivation for achieving enlightenment is to help yourself, as well as everybody else. Indo-Tibetan and Zen are the two Mahayana traditions.

The idea of interconnectedness or interdependence of humans to animals to plants to the environment, our minds to our bodies, etc., has a natural appeal to any thoughtful person. Ignoring that fact leads to further misery. To see, for example, that eating meat, or using a product produced by child labor, or exploding with anger does not stand alone but causes a ripple effect, acknowledges the power of interdependence.

We can't be completely nonviolent (insects and small animals may die in the process of harvesting food), but being a vegetarian is a good way to practice nonviolence and live in harmony with reality.

Vegetarianism was not strictly taught by the Buddha since his order of monks and nuns begged for food, and it would not have been appropriate for them to be

picky. Also, in some Buddhist countries such as Tibet where only potatoes and barley grow well (average altitude of 13,000 ft.), one would have starved or at least suffered from malnutrition without some animal food sources. However, the Dalai Lama has urged Buddhists everywhere to try to be vegetarians.

We also need to refrain from ingesting toxic intellectual food rife with anger, greed, pride, and selfishness that is poisoning us and our society. The average diet in America consists of toxic substances that have created a societal crisis, such as crass materialism and blind consumerism, gratuitous violence in the media as well as real life, questionable or non-existent role models, lack of ideals, and on and on. Parents especially need to provide spiritual food to their children. For many, drugs and other self-destructive and escapist behavior seem to be the only solution when teachers and parents are spiritually barren.

The Buddhist answer to happiness and harmony does not depend on perfection of the "outer world". If the Earth were covered by thorns, the easiest way to protect your feet would be to buy a good pair of shoes, not to carpet the planet. The best protection for you and others is to engender a good heart, kindness, and compassion that cherish others as well

as ourselves. The actions that follow such a mind will naturally be virtuous and harmonious.

Buddhism has enjoyed a surge of popularity in western countries in recent years, perhaps because it appeals to the scientific mind of inquiry (the Buddha did not want people to believe what he said without first checking it out against their own experiences), has a sound psychological basis built on experiential methods (meditation being the main one) that work, and fills a spiritual void without being dogmatic or claiming exclusivity to truth. Buddhism is purely an invitation: try it and see what happens to your mind, and how it affects your everyday life. For over 2500 years, it has been a vital part of Asian culture; the tradition is alive and well today with many realized masters living and teaching in your back yard.

WHAT THE BUDDHA SAY ABOUT EATING MEAT

Ajahn Brahmavamso
Newsletter, April-June 1990,
Buddhist Society of Western
Australia.



Since the very beginning of Buddhism over 2500 years ago, Buddhist monks and nuns have depended on alms food. They were, and still are, prohibited from growing their own food, storing their own provisions or cooking their own meals. Instead, every morning they would make their day's meal out of whatever was freely given to them by lay supporters. Whether it was rich food or coarse food, delicious or awful tasting it was to be accepted with gratitude and eaten regarding it as medicine. The Buddha laid down several rules forbidding monks from asking for the food that they liked. As a result, they would receive just the sort of meals that ordinary people ate - and that was often meat.

Once, a rich and influential general by the name of Siha (meaning 'Lion') went to visit the Buddha. Siha had been a famous lay supporter of the Jain monks

but he was so impressed and inspired by the Teachings he heard from the Buddha that he took refuge in the Triple Gem (i.e. he became a Buddhist). General Siha then invited the Buddha, together with the large number of monks accompanying Him, to a meal at his house in the city the following morning. In preparation for the meal, Siha told one of his servants to buy some meat from the market for the feast. When the Jain monks heard of their erstwhile patron's conversion to Buddhism and the meal that he was preparing for the Buddha and the monks, they were somewhat peeved:

"Now at the time many *Niganthas* (Jain monks), waving their arms, were moaning from carriage road to carriage road, from cross road to cross road in the city: "Today a fat beast, killed by Siha the general, is made into a meal for the recluse Gotama (the Buddha), the recluse Gotama makes use of this meat knowing that it was killed on purpose for him, that the deed was done for his sake" [1].

Siha was making the ethical distinction between buying meat already prepared for sale and ordering a certain animal to be killed, a distinction which is not obvious to many westerners but which recurs throughout the Buddha's own teachings. Then, to

clarify the position on meat eating to the monks, the Buddha said:

"Monks, I allow you fish and meat that are quite pure in three respects: if they are not seen, heard or suspected to have been killed on purpose for a monk. But, you should not knowingly make use of meat killed on purpose for you." [2]

There are many places in the Buddhist scriptures which tell of the Buddha and his monks being offered meat and eating it. One of the most interesting of these passages occurs in the introductory story to a totally unrelated rule (*Nissaggiya Pacittiya* 5) and the observation that the meat is purely incidental to the main theme of the story emphasizes the authenticity of the passage:

Uppalavanna (meaning 'she of the lotus-like complexion') was one of the two chief female disciples of the Buddha. She was ordained as a nun while still a young woman and soon became fully enlightened. As well as being an *arahant* (enlightened) she also possessed various psychic powers to the extent that the Buddha declared her to be foremost among all the women in this field. Once, while Uppalavanna was meditating alone in the afternoon in the 'Blind-Men's Grove', a secluded forest outside of

the city of Savatthi, some thieves passed by. The thieves had just stolen a cow, butchered it and were escaping with the meat. Seeing the composed and serene nun, the chief of the thieves quickly put some of the meat in a leaf-bag and left it for her. Uppalavanna picked up the meat and resolved to give it to the Buddha. Early next morning, having had the meat prepared, she rose into the air and flew to where the Buddha was staying, in the Bamboo Grove outside of Rajagaha, over 200 kilometers as the crow (or nun?) flies! Though there is no specific mention of the Buddha actually consuming this meat, obviously a nun of such high attainments would certainly have known what the Buddha ate.

However there are some meats which are specifically prohibited for monks to eat: human meat, for obvious reasons; meat from elephants and horses as these were then considered royal animals; dog meat - as this was considered by ordinary people to be disgusting; and meat from snakes, lions, tigers, panthers, bears and hyenas - because one who had just eaten the flesh of such dangerous jungle animals was thought to give forth such a smell as to draw forth revenge from the same species!

Towards the end of the Buddha's life, his cousin Devadatta attempted to usurp the leadership of the

Order of monks. In order to win support from other monks, Devadatta tried to be more strict than the Buddha and show Him up as indulgent. Devadatta proposed to the Buddha that all the monks should henceforth be vegetarians. The Buddha refused and repeated once again the regulation that he had established years before, that monks and nuns may eat fish or meat as long as it is not from an animal whose meat is specifically forbidden, and as long as they had no reason to believe that the animal was slaughtered specifically for them.

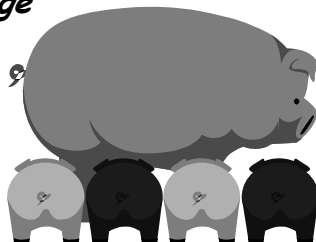
The *Vinaya*, then, is quite clear on this matter. Monks and nuns may eat meat. Even the Buddha ate meat. Unfortunately, meat eating is often seen by westerners as an indulgence on the part of the monks. Nothing could be further from the truth - I was a strict vegetarian for three years before I became a monk. In my first years as a monk in North-East Thailand, when I bravely faced many a meal of sticky rice and boiled frog (the whole body bones and all), or rubbery snails, red-ant curry or fried grasshoppers - I would have given ANYTHING to be a vegetarian again! On my first Christmas in N.E. Thailand an American came to visit the monastery a week or so before the 25th. It seemed too good to be true, he had a turkey farm and yes, he quickly understood how

we lived and promised us a turkey for Christmas. He said that he would choose a nice fat one especially for us and my heart sank. We cannot accept meat knowing it was killed especially for monks. We refused his offer. So I had to settle for part of the villager's meal - frogs again.

Monks may not exercise choice when it comes to food and that is much harder than being a vegetarian.

Nonetheless, we may *encourage*

vegetarianism and if our lay supporters brought only vegetarian food and no meat, well...monks may not complain either! May you take the hint and be kind to animals.



Reference:

[1] Book of the Discipline, Vol. 4, p324

[2] ibid, p325

VEGETARIANISM - A HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Vegetarianism is a popular eating habit associated with Buddhism in the spirit of compassion. Although it is not a compulsory Buddhist practice, it is encouraged as it confers various benefits including good health. Scientific research has shown conclusively that vegetarians are generally at a lower risk than non-vegetarians for heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, hypertension and obesity.



Emotionally, it reduces our guilt of sustaining our lives at the expense of the suffering of other living beings. It is also said that meat eating may contribute to angry temperament. This could be due to the transferring of negative emotional energy of the slaughtered animals into the meat, and subsequently into our human body. Law of physics says that energy cannot be created or destroyed but can only be transferred. So, anger as a form of negative energy is transferred into the human body by meat eating, and thus may contribute to our angry temperament. Try

reducing meat intake as a holistic approach in anger management.

For more information on vegetarianism especially on the nutritional aspect of it e.g. should I be worried about getting enough protein, vitamin B12, calcium, and iron on a vegetarian diet? (answer is NO), Can infants and children become vegetarian? (answer is YES), kindly refer to the following website of INTERNATIONAL VEGETARIAN UNION.



<http://www.ivu.org>

Having said that being a vegetarian can confer physical, mental and spiritual health, would you insist that your family member diagnosed with e.g. stroke who has been a habitual meat eater to become a vegetarian? My mother has been diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. Since then, she has been a partial vegetarian for health reason at her own will. In my personal opinion, if a person is eager to become a vegetarian, by all means go ahead in view of the various benefits. But, if a person especially a sick one is reluctant to become a vegetarian (most of my

patients fall into this category), we should be compassionate enough to find an alternative solution for them.

Due to convenience, cultural and personal belief, it is much easier to convince someone to adopt a conventional well-balanced healthy diet; low fat, sugar, salt, additives with lots of fruits, vegetables, water and regular exercise. This is frequently good enough and much better than not eating at all, that can further weaken the body immune system. I have seen a lot of cancer patients who remain as meat eater but with dietary restriction who cope rather well with their sickness. Spiritually, this is also much better than inducing fear and guilt in patients e.g. "You eat so much of meat, that's why you get cancer. If you continue to eat meat, you have more bad karma and your cancer will sure relapse!" That wouldn't sound very compassionate and may precipitate a depression. In this way, instead of trying to be helpful, we may do more harm.

As for me personally, I am gradually moving towards to become a vegetarian as much as I can. While I'm doing this, I also keep on reminding myself over what I have heard in a Dharma talk about being a vegetarian from a karmic point of view:



WHAT COMES OUT OF OUR MOUTH
(RIGHT SPEECH) IS MORE
IMPORTANT THAN
WHAT GOES INTO OUR MOUTH (FOOD)

THE TIME AND PLACE FOR EATING

Ajahn Brahmavamso
Newsletter, July-September 1990,
Buddhist Society of Western Australia.

For a monastic (a monk or a nun) food is to be regarded as medicine and not as a pleasure. In the spirit of the Middle Way it should be taken in just sufficient quantity to keep the body healthy. In the *Kitagiri Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya* is found the following passage:

"Once when the Buddha was touring in the region of Kasi together with a large *Sangha* of monks he addressed them saying: 'I, monks, do not eat a meal in the evening. Not eating a meal in the evening I, monks, am aware of good health and of being without illness and of buoyancy and strength and living in comfort. Come, do you too, monks, not eat a meal in the evening. Not eating a meal in the evening you too, monks, will be aware of good health and..... and living in comfort. "



Consequently, eating only in the period from dawn

until noon became the tradition for Buddhist monastics, but not without some resistance at first. In the *Latukikopama Sutta*, also of the *Majjhima Nikaya*, Venerable Udayin spoke thus to the Buddha:

"We, revered sir, used to eat in the evening and in the morning and in the afternoon. Revered sir, the Lord at that time addressed the monks saying: 'Please do you, monks, give up eating at this wrong time during the afternoon'. I was depressed because of this, revered sir, I was sorry and thought 'The Lord speaks of our giving up that sumptuous food which faithful laypeople give us in the afternoon and of our rejecting it'."

Then we used to eat (just) in the morning and in the evening. It was at this time that the Lord addressed the monks saying: 'Please do you, monks, give up eating in the evening'. I was depressed because of this, revered sir, I was sorry and thought 'The Lord speaks of our giving up that which is reckoned as the more sumptuous of these two meals and of our rejecting it'."

But Venerable Udayin, who, by the way, was known for being fat, soon got over his disappointment and realized the benefits of restraint in eating. Moreover, he appreciated that as monks obtain their food mainly

on almsround, going out for almsfood in the evening had certain disadvantages. The same sutta continues:

"Once, revered sir, when monks were walking for almsfood in the dense darkness of the night, they would walk into a pond at the village entrance, or they would stumble into the village cesspool, or they would blunder into a thorny hedge or stumble into a sleeping cow, and they would meet young men up to no good and wanton women. Once, revered sir, I walked for almsfood in the dense darkness of the night and a certain woman saw me during a lightening flash as she was washing a bowl and, terrified at seeing me she uttered a scream of horror: 'How terrible for me, indeed there is a demon after me'. This said, I, revered sir, said to this woman: 'Sister, I am no demon, I am a monk standing for almsfood'. She said 'The monks father must be dead, the monks mother must be dead! It were better for you, monk, to have your stomach cut out with a sharp butchers knife than to walk for almsfood for the sake of your belly in the dense darkness of the night'."

A monk or nun who eats food outside of the proper time, from dawn until noon, commits an offence called *Pacittiya*. To free themselves of the offence they have to approach a fellow monk or nun and tell them

of their misdeed. This simple acknowledgement is all that is required for it serves to heighten one's sense of duty, and of responsibility, and so it is a strong incentive to be more punctilious in the future. Thus these rules of Vinaya do not rely on punishment but rather urging greater mindfulness and restraint so that the same mistake will not be repeated.

Though solid foods are disallowed outside of the morning period, other substances were allowed in the afternoon or evening, especially where there is a need such as sickness. Strained fruit and vegetable juices are allowable in the afternoon, especially for thirsty monks and nuns. Then the five traditional Indian 'medicines' of ghee, oil, butter/cheese, honey and sugar were allowed in the afternoon as a 'tonic', to be used for such reasons as



when a monk or nun had been working hard, when it was very cold, or when they had received insufficient almsfood that morning. Clear meat or bean broths are allowed in the afternoon for very sick monks or nuns. Drinks like tea, herbal infusions, ginger, cocoa and coffee are also allowable in the afternoon as much as a monk or nun requires. Milk, however, is the subject of some controversy. Some monks say it is allowable in

the afternoon, some say it isn't and our tradition says it 'aint.

Whatever is allowable and what is not and when, a good monk or nun always remembers the WHY of eating. The following verses of the Buddha are to be reflected upon whenever taking nourishment and they are heard recited at Bodhinyana before every meal by one of the monks:

"Wisely reflecting we use this almsfood, not for fun, not for pleasure, not for fattening and not for beautification. But only for the maintenance and nourishment of this body, for keeping it healthy, for helping with the holy life, thinking thus: I will allay hunger without overeating, so that I may continue to live blamelessly and at ease."

Chapter 4



MEDITATION AS A THERAPY

VIPASSANA THERAPY

Vipassana meditation is a unique form of meditation taught by the Buddha. It is also known as insight or mindfulness meditation. This meditation encompasses the practise of Noble Eightfold Path, emphasising on Right Mindfulness. Its ultimate aim is for enlightenment. However, it also has a good 'side effect' of good health. Vipassana therapy refers to the practise of Vipassana meditation for the purpose of good health.



There has been proper documentation of cases that have benefited from Vipassana therapy. I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. In his book entitled, "Dharma Therapy - Cases of Healing Through Vipassana", various cases of medical conditions like wind, tumour, arthritis, toddy addiction, asthma, cancer, piles and others were healed through Vipassana meditation. The following is one of the many true stories from his book.

Around the year 1945, at a village by the name of Leik Chin, about four miles north-west of Seik Khun Village, a Thera who had merely heard about Mahasi Sayadaw's technique of Vipassana contemplation approvingly believed in it, and strove-in-mindfulness in his own monastery. It seems that just a few days later, extraordinary Vipassana concentration and insight knowledge arose and a chronic 'wind' disease, which he had been suffering from for over twenty years, completely vanished. The chronic disease had tormented him over ever since he was as eighteen-year-old samanera and had necessitated medicine and massage to be taken daily. Apart from that he was also afflicted by rheumatic aches, which again required daily massage for relief. The aches were relieved as well up to until he no longer dependent on massage and medications.

There are a lot of centres in Malaysia that teach Vipassana Meditation e.g. Selangor Vipassana Centre, Buddhist Wisdom Centre, Brickfields Maha Vihara etc. You may want to give a try to boost your health while aiming for enlightenment in the long term.

TAKE GOOD CARE OF DHARMA &
DHARMA WILL TAKE GOOD CARE
OF YOUR HEALTH!

MEDICAL BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

One of the gems in Buddhism that contributes greatly to health and healing is the practice of meditation. It has been medically and scientifically studied especially by Professor Dr. Herbert Benson (Harvard Medical School) and Professor Dr. Jon Kabat Zinn (Massachusetts Medical School), and found to have a safe and effective role in management of all the following conditions:

- Anxiety Disorders
- Depressive Disorders
 - Insomnia
 - Hypertension
 - Diabetes Mellitus
- Ischemic Heart Disease
 - Bronchial Asthma
 - Peptic Ulcer Disease
- Gastro-oesophageal Reflux Disease
 - Irritable Bowel Syndrome
 - Premenstrual Syndrome
 - Infertility
 - Psoriasis
- All forms of pain and ache

- Vomiting during pregnancy
- Side effects of cancer therapy etc.



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MINDFULNESS MEDITATION BASED STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAMME

Mindfulness meditation is described in the Buddhist literature as "the only way for purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the cessation of physical pain and mental distress, for the realization of Nibbana". In short, it overcomes physical and mental pain.

The principle of mindfulness meditation was first introduced into behavioural medicine by Professor Emeritus Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn (PhD). He is the one who founded the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre in Worcester. The aim of the clinic is to manage chronic pain and stress-related disorders using mindfulness meditation techniques. In the 25 years since the clinic was found, more than 15 000 medical patients have gone through the mindfulness meditation programme and benefited from it. The training programme has also been scientifically studied and proven to be effective in terms of symptoms improvement, compliance, safety and long-term efficacy. It has also been proven to enhance the immune system.

The mindfulness meditation programme is an 8-week programme. Patients have to attend sessions once a week for two and a half hours and do homework of daily meditation practice for forty-five minutes. The components of the programme include the following.

1. Mindfulness of breathing and body scan. This involves scanning the various parts of our body with breath, and allows the healing energy of breath to diffuse the tension in them.
2. Mindfulness of body movement and stretching by practising hatha yoga with full awareness.
3. Mindfulness of thoughts and feelings by allowing it to come and go without attachment.
4. Informal mindfulness practices by having moment-to-moment awareness in eating, walking, standing, talking, washing, cleaning and other daily activities.
5. Noticing a pleasant event everyday for a week and to really be there fully to appreciate and enjoy it e.g. having a cup of tea.
6. Keeping an Awareness Diary to write down thoughts and feelings in a non-judgemental way.

7. Keeping the spirit of loving-kindness and compassion.
8. An 8-hour silent meditation retreat.
9. Looking deeply into unpleasant events with the power of moment-to-moment awareness and skilful reflections, and thus preventing a stress reaction.
10. Keeping a non-striving, non-doing or no-goal attitude.

In Malaysia, I do not think that there is any medical centre that offers such kind of mindfulness meditation programme. But, we are very fortunate because there are many meditation retreats throughout the year with similar programmes that we can attend. They are organised by various Buddhist centres and provides good opportunity if you would like to have a taste of mindfulness meditation therapy.



MINDFUL MEDICINE

An interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D, is founder and director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, Massachusetts, as well as Professor of Medicine in the University's medical school. The Stress Reduction Clinic is a unique and revolutionary approach to healing in the American medical establishment. Olympic athletes, corporate executives, judges, physicians, medical students, hospital employees, and Catholic priests have all benefited from mindfulness training at the Stress Reduction Clinic.



Jon Kabat-Zinn was one of the earliest students of Zen Master Seung Sahn and was a founding member of Cambridge Zen Center. Over the years he has studied with a number of Buddhist teachers and incorporated their teachings, especially the practice of mindfulness, into his practice of medicine. His book *Full Catastrophe Living* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1990) was on the New York Times bestseller list.

The interview was conducted by Richard Streitfeld of the PRIMARY POINT staff.

Primary Point (PP): What inspired you to start the Stress Reduction Clinic?

Jon Kabat-Zinn: Ever since I began practicing meditation, I have felt an enormous need to bring meditation into the mainstream, particularly in environments like hospitals. They function in our society as "dukkha" (suffering) magnets: they draw in people whose lives are out of control with pain and suffering. And it's not like everyone is satisfied and cured when they go home. Since the mind plays such an important part in people's experience of their bodies and what's possible in their lives, it seemed that a hospital would be a perfect place to train people in meditative awareness. They could optimize their inner resources for healing and take responsibility for their health.

PP: Do you think people are more likely to accept these techniques because they are presented in an official, "established" setting?

JK: Yes. If you want to bring the essence of meditative practice into a mainstream medical institution, there are ways that will slant your

trajectory toward success just as there are other ways to do it that will slant it toward immediate rejection. If you go in talking about the Buddha and inviting masters with shaved heads for lectures, it's going to be perceived right away as some foreign cultural ideology - a belief system. Understandably so, it would likely be rejected.

PP: Most of the patients who go through the clinics report positive reactions. Is there anyone who can't seem to deal with it?

JK: Very few, actually. To enter the program, you must be referred by your doctor, so right away the legitimacy of this approach has been established. The clients are not being sent to learn to heal; they're not being sent to have their symptoms go away or to master them. They're being sent as a palliative, to help them become more calm.

And, we're very up front. We tell people what we do, and that it's going to be an immediate lifestyle change: you have to carve out forty-five minutes a day six days a week for formal meditation practice. We explain that in order to get the benefits of the stress reduction program you've got to make one hell of a commitment to yourself. If they're willing to make that commitment, they're already primed to go.

Ninety percent of the people we see are willing to make that commitment.

PP: Then one reason your success rate is so high is that people know what to expect.

JK: Yes. We tell them right away that it's stressful to take the stress reduction program! If you want to accomplish something, a certain amount of energy and work is required. Many people have had their medical complaint for seven years or longer. If there's any hope to use their own inner resources of mind and body to mitigate the physical and emotional pain, it doesn't come from wishful thinking. There has to be a certain grounding of intense work. That's the price of admission. And people love it, because they've never been talked to that way!

PP: They appreciate the honesty.

JK: Absolutely. We're saying, look, we don't know you, but life's trajectory has dropped you into this office at this point. 'Me doctor says you're here for this and this, but you're more complicated than your symptoms. We don't know what will come out of going through this program for eight weeks, but the chances are that if you start paying attention to your life and begin to look at it without the tinted glasses

you've been wearing, look more directly, there will be an opening.

PP: What are the general results?

JK: Some people make more "progress" than others. But we really try to adhere to a framework of "non-doing." We're not that interested in progress. We're not even sure that we know how to recognize it. Many people experience symptom reduction while others have certain insights. They may be subtle and don't go off with neon lights, but they change one's relationship with, say, one's body or spouse. Even in some of the cases that we might scientifically label "failures," because they don't change in the ways that the majority do, people continue to practice. People whose pain hasn't gotten any better are practicing with the original guided meditation tape five, ten years later. When I ask them, "Why? This isn't helping your pain at all," they respond 'That's alright. It's still better when I do it than when I don't.'

PP: Besides the techniques, what else do people come away with?

JK: A lot of people drop the formal practice but maintain the mindfulness in daily living. They've developed it as a life skill. In times of great stress or

pain, they know how to go to their breathing, to use it to calm down and broaden the field of perception, so that they can see with a larger perspective.

PP: People somehow internalize, not simply the technique, but where it's coming from.

JK: Exactly. And that's our emphasis. We don't want a group of imitators when we get through with them, nor a group of super-meditators who are all tripped out about meditation. What we want are people who are basically strong, flexible, and balanced, and have a perspective on their own inner being that is accepting and generous.

PP: Do you feel that the foundations of the program are Buddhist principles?

JK: Without question. Mindfulness is often spoken of as the heart of Buddhist meditation. It was one of the major teachings of the Buddha, ramified through all of the different traditions of Asia. We try to teach in a way that combines intuitively the best of the Vipassana orientation with the most accessible and least cryptic of the Zen energy. The combination is quite wonderful.

We use the breath as a major focus of awareness, and then we integrate it with a range of different experiences. Then we get mindfulness of breathing with emotional waves as they rise up in the mind and the body, mindfulness of sounds and thoughts and feelings and external situations that may be threatening or joyous or whatever.

The techniques are secondary to the cultivation of what in Zen would be called "clear mind." In order to have a certain clarity of mind, you have to develop a certain amount of calmness. We're trying to cultivate calmness and concentration in a context of clarity, perception, and mindfulness.

PP: Do people become dependent on you?

JK: Most of the people we see don't trust themselves at all when they first come in. They don't trust their own bodies, they don't trust their own experience. Usually they want someone else, like the doctor, to be the authority. We work very hard not to fall into that. The temptation is very great to be the guru, the great expert in meditation. In fact, we are constantly working to mirror back to them not to make us into somebody special. If anybody's special, we're all special.

We teach the need to trust your body, even if you feel that it has betrayed you with cancer. We teach the need to know those parts of yourself that are more right with you than wrong with you. You begin to discover that there's an awful lot right with you, just by virtue of having a body and having the breath go in and out.

People do start to experience a greater sense of caring for others, grounded in a revolutionary newfound caring for themselves.

PP: It sounds like there is a transformation.

JK: Yes. I don't want to overstate the case. The two fundamental things that most people get out of the program, independent of symptom reduction, are these. First, the breath is an ally and can be used to calm down and see more clearly. The other, related discovery is that you are not the content of your thoughts. You don't have to believe them or react to them. That's incredibly liberating.

PP: Are any of these experiences comparable to what we call awakening or enlightenment in Buddhist practice?

JK: A lot of people come to the meditation centers with a lot of baggage, a lot of expectations. They already "know" about enlightenment, and they want it. That's a big impediment. The people we see, they don't know about enlightenment, they don't WANT it! They're coming because of their suffering; it's a situation made to order for Buddhist work.

Comparing it with various levels of enlightenment experiences is difficult: we don't work with people for very long eight weeks, and then they can come back and recharge their batteries. People do have small experiences of going beyond themselves, of transcendence. We've had several people who have had knock-your-socks-off enlightenment experiences, of the self falling away and so forth. You know it immediately, because the vocabulary that they use is so unusual in describing it. But we don't set this as a goal in people's minds. It's more a question of developing one's own inner wisdom for right living and right awareness.

PP: I've heard some stories about just how strongly people are affected.

JK: There was a famous trial in Massachusetts a few years ago. The defense lawyer was a long-term Vipassana student. After the jury had been selected,

the judge delivered instructions on how to listen to evidence. It was pure mindfulness teaching: moment-to-moment, dispassionate, non-judgmental awareness - listening mind. The lawyer approached the judge later and asked, "Where the hell did you get that?" The judge replied "Oh, I'm taking the stress reduction class at the U. Mass, Medical Center, and it seemed we could use a little more mindfulness in our judicial proceedings."

PP: And what about the medical students themselves? As more and more of them take this course, how do you see them taking it into their work?

JK: One of our ulterior motives is to transform the way medicine is practiced. We don't have a health care system; we have a disease care system. We are trying to influence doctors and medical students in the direction of mindfulness: mindful practice of medicine, mindful communication with people who are hurting, mindful encounter with the patient as a whole person. It's almost axiomatic that people have to cultivate awareness in their own lives, in their own bodies, if they are going to be able to develop empathy and compassion for the people they see.

ALLAYING AIDS THROUGH THE POWER OF MEDITATION

-By Aphaluch Bhatiasavi-

Phra Acharn Rat is under no illusion that meditation can cure AIDS, but he does believe it can offer substantial relief.

BANGKOK POST, 29TH
DECEMBER 1997. Many HIV positive people who have visited Wat Doi Kerng in Mae Hong Son for the meditation course believe Phra Acharn Rat Rattanayano can cure AIDS, but the monk himself would deny the claim.



"There is no cure for AIDS yet," he said. "AIDS is like the flu. Even if the virus is suppressed with good health, it will hide within our body and will take over once we become weak."

According to Phra Acharn Rat, 49, meditation is no cure for AIDS, but like an exercise that keeps people in good health, meditation makes people feel cured in their own minds.

"I don't want to say that Dharma can completely cure AIDS because I don't know much about the science of the HIV virus. I can say however that Dharma can make a person feel strong, strong enough to suppress the virus within the body so that it remains inactive."

People with AIDS from all parts of the country travel all the way to Mae Sariang district in Mae Hong Son in the far north just to practise meditation at Wat Doi Kerng.

Phra Acharn Rat says many people who visit the temple don't want to return home, "but I have to always explain to them that we can't house anyone for good. If we allow one person to stay, we won't be able to deny others that follow."

The monk said the temple initially began offering general meditation, not focusing its course on rehabilitating people with HIV/AIDS. But after one person with the virus found out that his health had improved after meditating, he introduced it to others experiencing the same problem.

"It was only when more and more people with AIDS came to us that we realized that we could use Dharma to heal health problems," he said.

Professor Jiralak Jongsatitman of Chiang Mai University studied the meditation course at Wat Doi Kerng and found that there was an emphasis on the value of local wisdom developed to help solve the AIDS problems and the strength of traditional methods of healing.

Dharma-osod, or meditation for the treatment of illnesses, is one choice for people with AIDS who are willing to try everything possible to improve their immune system, said Phra Acharn Rat.

Teaching people with problems like AIDS to meditate is easier than teaching the general public because it is one of the limited choices they have left, he said.

"I've observed people with HIV/AIDS place their belief completely in the matter. Belief is very important because if you believe in something, it will automatically boost confidence."

Most people with AIDS who visit the temple say initially they want to kill themselves because they have nothing to depend on. But after meditating, they realize that death is not something they should wait for, he said.

Phra Acharn Rat was inspired to join the monkhood for the first time for three months in 1972 after dreaming that a person in white was warning him to do good otherwise he would die of an accident. As the seventh of a family of nine children, he had few responsibilities when he was young. Like any other youth, Phra Acharn Rat liked to drink and gamble with his friends. He even led a music band and accumulated heavy debts.

"I was very scared of death after the dream and decided to go into the monkhood. After staying in the temple for three months, I didn't want to leave, but had to return to work so I could pay back my debts," he said.

Before joining the monkhood, Phra Acharn Rat had taught at a local school for seven years.

"I returned to work for another two years, but after clearing our debts I again became a monk, now for life."

When asked what he gained from serving in the monkhood for so many years, he replied only, "knowledge".

Phra Acharn Rat is known for his *samathi mun*, or meditation by rotating the upper part of the body. He was inspired by this new method of meditating to relieve stress and pain by the Dharma wheel or *Dharmachak*. According to Phra Acharn Rat, after meditating in the *samathi mun* position for some time, people rid themselves of stress and depression through different forms: "by screaming, crying or vomiting." After the meditation, they feel light and fresh, he said.

Prasert Taechaboon, the deputy chairman of the network of People living with HIV/AIDS (PWA) of Thailand, says he was given a second life by Phra Acharn Rat. Mr Prasert had been living with HIV for almost 10 years. He fell very ill at one point and had no hope of living on until he found out about the meditation at Wat Doi Kerng.

"Although brought up a Christian, I have become a strong believer in Buddhist teachings because of Phra Acharn Rat. He has given me a new life by introducing me to *samathi mun*," said Mr Prasert, who had lost hope in life but has since become an active AIDS campaigner.

According to Phra Acharn Rat, if an illness is not treated with the peace of mind that can be obtained

through meditation, the illness can be healed only temporarily.

Since most people in the initial stages of AIDS infection become weak and do not feel like eating, the temple focuses its meditation on making people improve their appetite, he said.

A healthy appetite also rules out problems of diarrhea, which is common among people with HIV/AIDS, said the monk.

"To help a person increase his appetite, we ask him to focus his concentration on the stomach. The main spots are an inch left and an inch right of the navel."

To keep healthy, he said people with chronic diseases like cancer and AIDS should meditate continuously to keep themselves strong.

"AIDS deteriorates immunity every day. It is therefore necessary to meditate regularly to boost the immune system and make the person feel strong, strong enough to control the AIDS virus."

Phra Acharn Rat says meditation is similar to the use of AIDS drugs like AZT and Protease Inhibitors because it makes the virus inactive when being used.

"Once meditation is stopped for a long period of time and the person begins to worry, the virus will become active again."

Phra Acharn Rat received an honorary award last year for his welfare work in helping local people and the hill tribes living in Mae Hong Son. He also received a trophy in 1992 from the provincial governor for preaching Dharma and helping people understand the teachings of Lord Buddha.

The temple provides meditation practice three times a day for the first seven days of the month.

Phra Acharn Rat said meditation can help tackle diseases like AIDS because they are caused by violating Buddhist teachings.

"AIDS is the result of Buddhist teachings being violated often by humans. We've been taught that it is a sin to lie or to get involved with women other than one's wife," he said.

Phra Acharn Rat said he is willing to teach other organizations to conduct meditation courses, but does not want the temple to turn into a rehabilitation centre.

The temple opens its meditation course the first week of each month and those interested can make reservations on 053-681535. Only 30 people are accepted each month.



Hi HIV virus, May you be well and happy!

WALKING MEDITATION

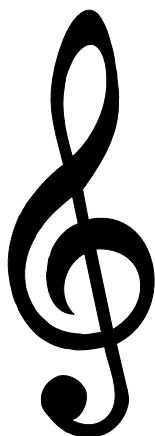


Walking meditation is a unique Buddhist practice as it confers both physical and mental health. It is a known fact in the medical literature that brisk walking for about 30 minutes at least 3 times a week is good enough for physical health. Walking meditation adds mental health benefits to the usual walking as it restrains the mind from wandering thoughts, fears and worries. This results in physical fitness plus relaxation and calmness. This is how I do my walking meditation:

1. Find any place with enough space to walk e.g. Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and just start walking naturally.
2. As I move my RIGHT leg, I will bring awareness to it and mentally recite, "LET GO!" This will condition me to abandon my wandering thoughts of the past and future.

3. As I move my LEFT leg, I will bring awareness to it and mentally recite, "DON'T KNOW! This will condition me to abandon whatever intellectual thinking that I'm holding on to.
4. After some time, I'll omit the recitation and just walk silently and joyfully with full awareness of each step.

You may modify the above techniques according to your preference as long as you keep to the principles of physical walking with full mental awareness of the present moment.



We walk to the right
And we walk to the left
And we walk and we walk
Everything is all right
To the right I LET GO
To the left I DON'T KNOW
With a smile on the face
I'll be light and bright



HEALING POWER OF SPIRITUAL JOY

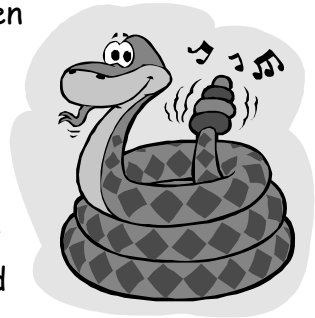
On one occasion, Venerable Maha Cunda was very sick. The Buddha personally gave him a talk on Seven Factors of Enlightenment (Mindfulness, Investigative Mind, Effort, Joy, Tranquility, Concentration and Equanimity). After the talk, Venerable Maha Cunda immediately recovered from his sickness. Similar healing incidents with reflections on Seven Factors of Enlightenment also happened to Venerable Maha Kassapa and the Buddha himself.



On another occasion, Venerable Girimananda was also very sick. The Buddha then instructed Venerable Ananda to speak to him about the Ten Perceptions (Impermanence, Non-self, Unattractiveness, Danger, Abandoning, Dispassion, Cessation, Distaste for every world, Undesirability of all fabrications and Mindfulness of Breathing). As Venerable Girimananda heard these Ten Perceptions, he immediately recovered from his sickness as well.

There was another monk who while listening to the Dharma was bitten by a snake. He ignored the snake bite and continued to listen to the Dharma. The venom spread and the pain became acute. He then reflected on the purity of his virtuous conduct from the time of his higher ordination. Great joy and satisfaction then arose within him when he realized the spotless nature of his character. This psychological change acted as anti-venom and he was immediately cured.

Do such healing 'miracles' happen only to highly cultivated monks? NO! It can happen to lay man as well. On another occasion, Anathapindika, the millionaire lay disciple of the Buddha was very sick as well. He requested Venerable Sariputta to visit him. On



being told that the pains were excruciating and increasing, Venerable Sariputta delivered a discourse reminding Anathapindika of his own virtues. It is reported that when Anathapindika's attention was brought to focus on his noble qualities, his pain subsided and he recovered from his sickness.

THE POWER OF TRUTH PROTECTS
THE FOLLOWER OF TRUTH

The above healing stories point to the fact that whenever one's attention is drawn to the TRUTH and one's spiritual qualities at times of sickness, healing can occur. It generates joy in the mind and activates health-promoting factors in the body. Therefore, it is very important to listen to the Dharma when we are sick. On the other hand when we are healthy, we must remember to practise a lot of meritorious actions, so that we can have an easier time rejoicing on them when we are sick.

When we visit people who are sick, we should always spiritually counsel them to recall and rejoice on their good deeds in life. You may say, "What happens if the person has been very wicked and has not done any good deeds throughout his life?" Well, everyone must have done something right in life although it can be little.



But, when we focus on little, it can expand into a lot. Even if a person really can't recall any good deeds in his life, we can at least help him to start doing so by gradually inspiring him to repent over his evil deeds. After that, we can encourage him to cultivate good thoughts and finally perform good deeds.

This is one of the Buddhist psycho-spiritual approaches that I use to help my patients e.g. those bedridden with Stroke and Depression. I will ask the family members to get him a diary. Then I will tell the family members to help him to write down all the good deeds that he has done in life. I will also advise the patient to note down the various good deeds that he would like to do when he has recovered. Meanwhile, the family members can help him with his aspirations and let him rejoice on it. This will strengthen the mind and facilitate healing.



**WHAT
MERITORIOUS
ACTIONS HAVE I
PERFORMED?**

SKILFUL REFLECTIONS ON SICKNESS

The Buddha teaches about *YONISO MANASIKARA* or skilful reflection. It is basically any kind of placing of the mind to arouse wholesome states of mind that are free from defilements. The following are the various skilful reflections that we can do when we are sick.



Let me tell you the joy of being sick!

1. It is a signal that something is not right in your body. For example, if you have chest pain, it is a warning that you need to see a doctor to rule out an underlying coronary heart disease before it's too late.

2. It is an indication that you need to have a more stress free life. A lot of pain and sickness are psychosomatic in nature. It is the body's natural way of telling us to rest more and learn how to handle stress more effectively.

3. It creates the urgency to practise the Dharma. When we are strong and healthy, we think we are immortals and may not appreciate the Dharma well. Not surprisingly, people become more spiritual when they are sick and in trouble.

4. It teaches about impermanence. Old age, sickness and death! They are all natural and come together as a package in our life with youthfulness, health and birth.

5. It strengthens compassion. When we are sick, we appreciate the pain of others better. Thus, we will have greater urge to do something to relieve the suffering of others.

6. It develops gratitude and contentment. Only people who have been severely ill would appreciate the wealth of health.

7. It promotes generosity. Being sick, we give others the opportunity to cultivate generosity by giving them a chance to serve us. This also brings the family members more closely together especially in children.

8. It cultivates humility. When we are sick, we remember that we are not almighty. We are subject to the same natural pain of old age, sickness and death just like others. The awareness that we are not greater reduces our pride and makes us more humble.

9. It allows our bad Karma to expire. One of the causes of sickness is bad karma. When we are sick, we allow our past bad karma to take effect. In this way, we can clear our 'karmic debts'.

10. It enables us to test the level of our spiritual cultivation. An ounce of practice is worth more than a tonne of theories. One of the prestigious dharma examinations that we all should enrol for in life is - confronting sickness!

Regular reflections on sickness in this way will help us to better overcome sickness and transform it into wisdom.

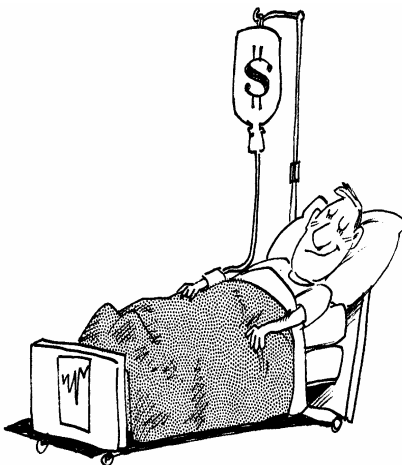
GRATITUDE & CONTENTMENT FOR HEALTH

The following visualization exercise based on gratitude and contentment is very effective in dealing with mental distress associated with whatever physical illness we have.

1. Find a quiet environment e.g. alone in your room.
2. Find a comfortable position e.g. lying on a bed.
3. Bring your awareness to whatever medical problem you are having at the moment.
4. Recall and visualise vividly various people you have encountered in life who are suffering from similar medical problem. Be GRATEFUL that you are not alone.
5. Recall and visualise vividly various people you have encountered in life who are suffering from medical problems WORSE than what you are suffering now. Be GRATEFUL that you are not the worst.

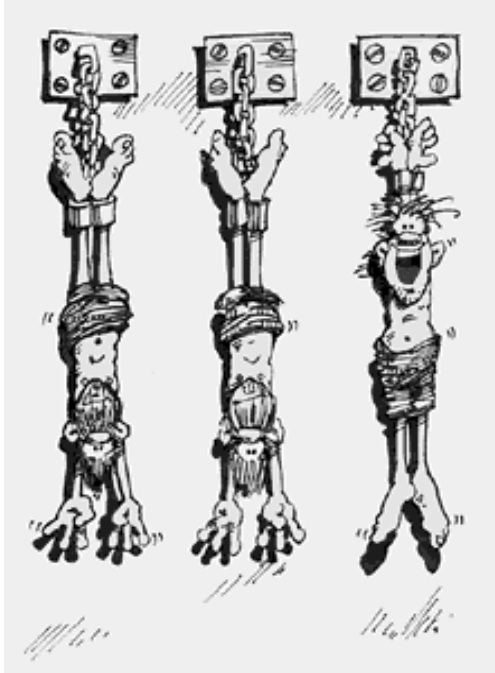
To do this visualization exercise effectively, you might need to visit regularly places with a lot of suffering because of medical problem. I recommend any hospital with a lot of cancer, stroke, renal dialysis, bone fracture, head injury and psychiatric patients. This will enhance our sense of perspective in life - the ability to really feel that we are much more fortunate than others and should be GRATEFUL. When we can really feel this, our pain will then automatically dissipate.

Gratitude itself promotes health. The law of the mind operates in such a way that whatever our mind focuses at, it will grow. So, when we are grateful for our good health, we are actually focusing on our good health, and it will grow as well leading to better health.



**Thank Buddha that
I have insurance
coverage for my
hospitalisation!**

IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE



- Andrew Matthews -

**Whatever happens to me in life,
I'll always count my blessings!**

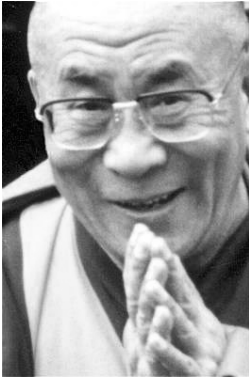
I have been suffering from allergic rhinitis (nose allergy) since childhood. When it strikes, I will have a hard time tolerating my itchy eyes, runny nose and continuous sneezing. When this happens, I will always

remind myself, "You should be grateful as you only have nose allergy and not nose cancer". I will then recall the pathetic dying nose cancer patients that I have seen in the oncology ward, breathing with not their nose but with a tracheostomy tube inserted into the neck. After that, I will definitely feel relatively much better and complain less about my little nose allergy. This is how the Buddha's teaching of **GRATITUDE** and **CONTENTMENT** help me in dealing with my nose allergy.

REVERENCE, HUMILITY,
GRATITUDE, CONTENTMENT &
OPPORTUNE HEARING OF THE DHARMA,
THIS IS THE HIGHEST BLESSING.

-Mangala Sutta-

DALAI LAMA JOINS WESTERN MEDICINE, EASTERN HEALING



NEW YORK (AP), May 6, 1998 - It was a medical marriage of East and West, with the Dalai Lama presiding.

The Tibetan spiritual master led some of the country's top doctors and researchers in a discussion Tuesday of how Eastern healing methods could revolutionize mainstream medicine.

"According to my little experience, the mental attitude is very, very important when you face illness," the Dalai Lama told the conference at the Beth Israel Medical Center. "It's a crucial factor, the interaction between the mind and the body."

This fall, Beth Israel will begin clinical studies of patients using Eastern healing techniques such as meditation along with conventional treatment, spending \$2 million a year for the pioneer program.

Among the panelists was Dr. Fred Epstein, head of the hospital's department of neurosurgery.

"I've not been involved with Buddhism until now," he said. But he was moved to learn about the Eastern methods after reading a poem written by a 16-year-old patient two weeks before he died of brain cancer.

"He talked about what it was like to be terrified, alone, and struggling for life without support that didn't go further than the technical," Epstein said.

"I became convinced that treating a child with a tumor involves much more than taking the tumor out. Medicine in the West has been so technologically oriented that we've missed a great deal in caring for people."

Sitting at the head of the a long flower-strewn table dressed in his traditional maroon Tibetan garb, the Dalai Lama discussed the powerful role of the mind in the healing process.



He later visited children at

hospital who suffer from brain tumors, playing with them, tickling them and handing them flowers.

The West, said the Dalai Lama, "pays so much attention to knowledge, and so little attention to the heart, to affection, to a sense of human caring."

DEEP RELAXATION

-Thich Nhat Hahn-
(Anger-Wisdom for Cooling
the Flames)



This is an example to guide yourself or others in Deep Relaxation. Allowing your body to rest is very important. When your body is at ease and relaxed, your mind will also be at peace. The practice of Deep Relaxation is essential for your body and mind to heal. Please take the time to practice it often. Although the following guided relaxation may take you thirty minutes, feel free to modify it to fit your situation. You can make it shorter - just five or ten minutes when you wake up in the morning, before going to bed in the evening, or during a short break in the middle of a busy day. You can also make it longer and more in-depth. The most important thing is to enjoy it.

Lie down comfortably on your back on the floor or on the bed. Close your eyes. Allow your arms to rest gently on either side of your body and let your legs relax, turning outwards. As you breathe in and out, become aware of your whole body lying down. Feel all the areas of your body that are touching the floor or the bed you are lying on; your heels, the backs of your

legs, your buttocks, your back, the back of your hands and arms, the back of your head. With each out breath, feel yourself sink deeper and deeper into the floor, letting go of tension, letting go of worries, not holding on to anything.

As you breathe in, feel your abdomen rising, and as your breathe out, feel your abdomen falling. For several breaths, just notice the rise and fall of your abdomen.

Now, as you breathe in, become aware of your two FEET. As you breathe out, allow your two feet to relax. Breathing in, send your love to your feet, and breathing out, smile to your feet. As you breathe in and out, know how wonderful it is to have two feet that allow you to walk, to run, to play sports, to dance, to drive, to do so many activities throughout the day. Send your gratitude to your two feet for always being there for you whenever you need them.



Breathing in, become aware of your right and left LEGS. Breathing out, allow all the cells in your legs to relax. Breathing in, smile to your legs, and breathing out, send them your love. Appreciate

whatever degree of strength and health is there in your legs. As you breathe in and out, send them your tenderness and care. Allow them to rest, sinking gently into the floor. Release any tension you may be holding in your legs.

Breathing in, become aware of your two HANDS lying on the floor. Breathing out, completely relax all the muscles in your two hands, releasing any tension you may be holding in them. As you breathe in, appreciate how wonderful it is to have two hands. As you breathe out, send a smile of love to your two hands. Breathing in and out, be in touch with all the things your two hands allow you to do, to cook, to write, to drive, to hold the hand of someone else, to hold a baby, to wash your own body, to draw, to play a musical instrument, to type, to build and fix things, to pet an animal, to hold a cup of tea. So many things are available to you because of your two hands. Just enjoy the fact that you have two hands and allow all the cells in your hands to really rest.

Breathing in, become aware of your two ARMS. Breathing out, allow your arms, to fully relax. As you breathe in, send your love to your arms, and as you breathe out, smile to them. Take the time to appreciate your arms and whatever strength and

health are there in your arms. Send them your gratitude for allowing you to hug someone else, to swing on a swing, to help and serve others, to work hard - cleaning the house, mowing the lawn, to do so many things throughout the day. Breathing in and out, allow your two arms to let go and rest completely on the floor. With each out-breathe, feel the tension leaving your arms. As you embrace your arms with your mindfulness, feel joy and ease in every part of your two arms.

Breathing in, become aware of your SHOULDERS. Breathing out, allow any tension in your shoulders to flow out into the floor. As you breathe in, send your love to your shoulders, and as you breathe out, smile with gratitude to them. Breathing in and out, be aware that you may have allowed a lot of tension and stress to accumulate in your shoulders. With each exhalation, allow the tension to leave your shoulders, feeling them relax more and more deeply. Send them your tenderness and care, knowing that you do not want to put too much strain on them, but that you want to live in a way that will allow them to be relaxed and at ease.

Breathing in, become aware of your HEART. Breathing out, allow your heart to rest. With your in-breath,

send your love to your heart. With your out-breath, smile to your heart. As you breathe in and out, get in touch with how wonderful it is to have a heart still beating in your chest. Your heart allows your life to be possible, and it is always there for you, every minute, every day. It never takes a break. Your heart has been beating since you were a four-week-old foetus in your mother's womb. It is a marvellous organ that allows you to do everything you do throughout the day. Breathe in and know that your heart also loves you. Breathe out and commit to live in a way that will help your heart to function well. With each exhalation, feel your heart relaxing more and more. Allow each cell in your heart to smile with ease & joy.

Breathing in, become aware of your STOMACH and INTESTINES. Breathing out, allow your stomach and intestines to relax. As you breathe in, send them your love and gratitude. As you breathe out, smile tenderly to them. Breathing in and out, know how essential these organs are to your health. Give them the chance to rest deeply. Each day they digest and assimilate the food you eat, giving you energy and strength. They need you to take the time to recognize and appreciate them. As you breathe in, feel your stomach and intestines relaxing and releasing all tension. As you breathe out, enjoy the fact that you have a stomach and intestines.

Breathing in, become aware of your EYES. Breathing out, allow your eyes and the muscles around your eyes to relax. Breathing in, smile to your eyes, and breathing out, send them your love. Allow your eyes to rest and roll back into your head. As you breathe in and out, know how precious your two eyes are. They allow you to look into the eyes of someone you love, to see a beautiful sunset, to read and write, to move around with ease, to see a bird flying in the sky, to watch a movie - so many things are possible because of your two eyes. Take the time to appreciate the gift of sight and allow your eyes to rest deeply. You can gently raise your eyebrows to help release any tension you may be holding around your eyes.

Here you can continue to relax other areas of your body, using the same pattern as above.

Now, if there is a place in your body that is SICK or in PAIN, take this time to become aware of it and send it your love. Breathing in allow this area to rest, and breathing out, smile to it with great tenderness and affection. Be aware that there are other parts of your body that are still strong and healthy. Allow these strong parts of your body to send their strength and energy to the weak or sick area. Feel the support, energy, and love of the rest of your body

penetrating the weak area, soothing and healing it. Breathe in and affirm your own capacity to heal, breathe out and let go of the worry or fear you may be holding in your body. Breathing in and out, smile with love and confidence to the area of your body that is not well.

Finally, breathing in, become aware of the **WHOLE** of your **BODY** lying down. Breathing out, enjoy the sensation of your whole body lying down, very relaxed and calm. Smile to your whole body as you breathe in, and send your love and compassion to your whole body as you breathe out. Feel all the cells in your whole body smiling joyfully with you. Feel gratitude for all the cells in your whole body. Return the gentle rise and fall of your abdomen.

If you are guiding other people, and if you are comfortable doing so, you can now sing a few relaxing songs or lullabies. To end, slowly stretch and open your eyes. Take your time to get up, calmly and lightly. Practice to carry the calm and mindful energy you generated into your next activity and throughout the day.



Chapter 5



EMBRACING PAIN

NOBODY CAN EXPERIENCE PAIN FOR US

In the Ratthapala Sutta, it is said that nobody can experience our pain on behalf of us. Therefore, we must learn how to cope skilfully with our pain.

King Koravya: Now, in this royal court there are elephant troops & cavalry & chariot troops & infantry that will serve to defend us from dangers. And yet you say, "The world is without shelter, without protector". How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?

Ven. Ratthapala: What do you think, great king: Do you have any recurring illness?

King Koravya: Yes, Master Ratthapala, I have a recurring wind-illness. Sometimes my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, stand around me saying, "This time King Koravya will die. This time King Koravya will die".

Ven. Ratthapala: And what do you think, great king: Can you say to your friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, "My friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen are commanded: all of you who are

present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain?" Or do you have to feel that pain all alone?

King Koravya: Oh, no, Master Ratthapala, I can't say to my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, "All of you who are present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain. I have to feel that pain all alone."

Ven. Ratthapala: It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said: "The world is without shelter, without protector." Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."



HOW VENERABLE ANURUDDHA DEALS WITH HIS PAIN

In the Gilayana Sutta, it was mentioned how Ven. Anuruddha used the power of Mindfulness to deal with his bodily pain.

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Anuruddha was staying near Savatthi in the Dark Forest - diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then a large number of monks went to Ven. Anuruddha and on arrival said to him, "What (mental) dwelling are you dwelling in so that the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind?"

"When



I

dwell with my mind well-

established in the four frames of reference, the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind. Which four? There is the case where I remain focused on the **BODY** in & of itself - ardent, alert, & mindful - putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. I remain focused on **FEELINGS** in & of themselves ... **MIND** in & of itself ... **MENTAL QUALITIES** in & of themselves - ardent, alert, & mindful - putting aside

greed & distress with reference to the world. When I dwell with my mind well-established in these four frames of reference, the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind."

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY, MONKS,
FOR THE PURIFICATION OF BEINGS,
FOR THE OVERCOMING OF SORROW AND LAMENTATION,
FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF PAIN AND GRIEF,
FOR REACHING THE RIGHT PATH,
FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF NIBBANA,
NAMELY THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS.

-Satipatthana Sutta-

LET GO THE PAIN AND IT WILL LET GO OF U

CHASE-IT-GO



"Oh! Stupid Pain,
Why are U here again?
I don't want to see U anymore.
U get lost!"

LET-IT-GO

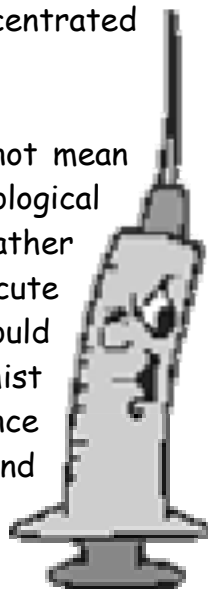


"Hello! My dear Pain,
Glad to see U again,
U are welcome to,
Stay as long as U want."

The Buddha says that, "EVERYTHING THAT ARISES HAS THE NATURE OF PASSING AWAY" This teaching of impermanence applies to pain as well. It gives us the hope and confidence that pain can go away on its own following natural law.

One of the great lessons I learn from meditation retreat is that pain will disappear when the mind is calm, concentrated and in harmony with the pain. Pain can go away! It is just a matter of time and right attitude. The trick is that we should focus all our energy into let-it-go instead of chase-it-go. When we let-it-go, the mind will be calm and concentrated and pain will automatically 'shy' away.

By sharing the above approach, I do not mean that we must not use pharmacological painkiller in dealing with pain. This is rather absurd for most of us especially with acute severe pain like appendicitis. What I would like to point out is the beauty of Buddhist psychological approach that can enhance the efficacy of painkiller e.g. Ponstan and Voltaren.



Interestingly, there has been documentation of skilful and experienced Buddhist

meditators who can tolerate severe cancer pain by just psychological approach of meditation. I suggest you read, "A Vipassana Cure" by Visuddhacara. It tells a wonderful true story of a Burmese yogi's battle with throat cancer without the use of painkiller. This evidently shows that the Buddhist psychological and meditational approach can do wonders in pain management.

FEAR OF PAIN

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

Fear is the major ingredient of pain. It is what makes pain hurt. Take away the fear and only feeling is left. In the mid 1970s, in a poor and remote forest monastery in the



northeast Thailand, I had a bad toothache. There was no dentist to go to, no telephone and no electricity. We didn't even have any aspirin or paracetamol in the medicine chest. Forest monks were expected to endure.

In the late evening, as often seems to happen with sickness, the toothache grew steadily worse and worse. I considered myself quite a tough monk but that toothache was testing my strength. One side of my mouth was solid with pain. It was by far the worst toothache I had ever had, or have ever had since. I tried to escape the pain by meditating on the breath. I had learned to focus on my breath when the mosquitoes were biting; sometimes I counted forty on my body at the same time, and I could overcome one feeling by focusing on another. But this pain was extraordinary. I would fill my mind with the feeling of breath for only two or three seconds, then the pain

would kick in the door of the mind that I'd closed, and come bursting in with a furious force.

I got up, went outside and tried walking meditation. I soon gave up too. I wasn't 'walking' meditation; I was 'running' meditation. I just couldn't walk slowly. The pain was in control: it made me run. But there was nowhere to run to. I was in agony: I was going crazy.

I ran back into my hut, sat down and started chanting. Buddhist chants are said to possess supernormal power. They can bring you fortune, drive away dangerous animals and cure sickness and pain - or so it said. I didn't believe it. I'd trained as a scientist. Magic chanting was all hocus-pocus, only for the gullible. So I began chanting hoping beyond reason that it would work. I was desperate. I soon had to stop that too. I realised I was shouting the words, screaming them. It was very late and I was afraid I would wake up the other monks. With the way I was bellowing out those verses, I would probably have woke the whole village a couple of kilometres away! The power of the pain wouldn't let me chant normally.

I was alone, thousand of miles from my home country in a remote jungle with no facilities, in unendurable pain with no escape. I'd tried everything I knew,

everything. I just couldn't go on. That's what it was like.

A moment of sheer desperation like that unlocks door into wisdom, doors that are never seen in ordinary life. One such door opened to me then, and I went through it. Frankly, there was no alternative.

I remembered two short words: 'LET GO'. I had heard those words many times before. I had expounded on their meaning to my friends. I though I knew what they meant: such is delusion. I was willing to attempt anything. So I tried letting go, one-hundred percent letting go. For the first time in my life, I really let go.



What happened next shook me. That terrible pain immediately vanished. It was replaced with the most delectable bliss. Wave upon wave of pleasure thrilled through my body. My mind settled into deep state of peace, so still, so delicious. I meditated easily, effortlessly now. After my meditation, in the early hours of the morning, I lay down to get some rest. I slept soundly, peacefully. When I woke up in time for my monastic duties, I noticed I had a toothache. But it was nothing compared to the previous night.

LETTING GO OF PAIN

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

In the previous story, it was the fear of the pain of that toothache that I had let go of. I had welcomed the pain, embraced it and allowed it to be. That was why it went.

Many of my friends who have been in great pain have tried this method and found it does not work! They come to me to complain, saying my toothache was nothing compared to their pain. That's not true. Pain is personal and cannot be measured. I explain to them why letting go didn't work for them using this story of my three disciples.



The first disciple, on great pain, tries letting go. "Let go," they suggest, gently, and wait.

"Let go!" they repeat when nothing changes

"Just let go!"

"Come on, Let Go."

"I'm telling you, Let! Go!"

"LET GO!"

We may find this funny but that is what we all do most of the time. We let go of the wrong thing. We should be letting go of the one saying, "Let go." We should be letting go of the 'control freak' within us, and we all know who that is. Letting go means 'no controller'.

The second disciple, in terrible pain, remembers this advice and let go of the controller. They sit with the pain, assuming that they're letting go. After ten minutes the pain is still the same, so they complain that letting go doesn't work. I explained to them that letting go is not a method for getting rid of pain, it is a method for being free from pain: "I'll let go for ten minutes and you pain, will disappear, OK?" That is not letting go of pain; that is trying to get rid of pain.

The third disciple in horrible pain says to that pain something like this: "PAIN, THE DOOR TO MY HEART IS OPEN TO YOU, WHATEVER YOU DO TO ME. COME IN."

The third disciple is fully willing to allow that pain to continue as long as it wants, even for the rest of their life; to allow it even to get worse. They give the pain freedom. They give up trying to control it. That is letting go. Whether pain stays or goes is now all the same to them. Only then does the pain disappear.

FINDING JOY AMID THE PAIN

-Darlene Cohen-
(Shambala Publications)

Even while we suffer, says Darlene Cohen, we can experience joy in life by opening up fully to our experience, not closing down. Drawing on her training as a Zen teacher and her own long experience with chronic pain, she offers an awareness approach to living well with suffering.



Catherine was a highly successful financial consultant in downtown San Francisco, a young woman thriving in a man's world, revelling in all the rewards business acumen can bring: luxurious condo, designer wardrobe, everything but disability insurance. After her car accident, she found herself living with and financially dependent on her mother again, just as she had been as a child.

Ricardo played soccer every weekend before he herniated a disk at work; soccer games had been the center of his social world and his prowess the cornerstone of his identity. He had been married only a year, but he could no longer make love to his energetic, vivacious wife. Forced into the role of

househusband while his wife supported them, he was depressed and humiliated.

Two years after her adored sister died of cancer, Emily seemed to be functioning just fine. She worked, had a family life, and pursued hobbies. But suddenly and unpredictably, she still burst into tears and cried effusively. It was as if her sister's death had opened up some old, deep wound that would never heal.

Many of us in the course of living our everyday lives endure terrible suffering: grief or anxiety or depression or physical pain that won't go away. I think of this kind of suffering as "mundane" anguish, affliction rendered bearable only because it's part of our everyday lives, like drawing breath or doing the dishes. If we ever got relief from it, we would suddenly apprehend how dreadful it actually is.

It doesn't even take a specific loss to experience mundane anguish. We humans suffer just because everything changes all the time. Having once achieved some goal, we can't rest on our laurels. All of life's circumstances are dynamic, ever evolving into something else. We clutch at security in vain.

I myself have had rheumatoid arthritis, a very painful

and crippling condition, for twenty years, and the stress of the disease—the fear of the future and the despair at what has been lost already—is often worse than the physical pain that I am suffering at any particular moment.

How do we deal with the mundane anguish of our everyday lives? How do we continue to live under crushing stress? And even further, how do we not just get through these things but have rich, full, and worthwhile lives that we actually want to live under any circumstances?

Our intelligence and dignity themselves are developed by our being alive for everything, including the mundane anguish of our lives. Just our awareness of our sensations, of our experience, with no object or idea in mind, is the practice of not preferring any particular state of mind. Such intimacy with our activity and the objects around us connects us deeply to our lives. This connection—to the earth, our bodies, our sense impressions, our creative energies, our feelings, other people—is the only way I know of to alleviate suffering. To me, our awareness of these things without preference is a meditation that synchronizes body and mind. This synchronization, the experience of deep integrity, of being all of a piece, is a very deep healing.

I've often heard people in pain say, "I know it would be better if I could accept my pain, and I keep trying and trying, but I can't! I can't accept it; I hate it!" I think many people have a skewed idea of what "accepting" pain is. If you have the idea that coping well should resemble serenity or equanimity, something like the proverbial "grace under fire," then you think you should resign yourself with a big cosmic grin, no matter what horrors are being visited upon you.

Actually, "accepting" pain sounds to me too passive to accurately describe the process of successfully dealing with chronic pain. It fails to convey the tremendous energy and courage it takes to accept physical pain as part of your life. Truly accepting pain is not at all like passive resignation. Rather, it is active engagement with life in its most intimate sense. It is meeting, dancing with, raging at, turning toward. To accept your pain on this level, you must cultivate particular skills. After you have developed some proficiency, dealing with pain feels much more like an embrace, or the bond that forms between sparring partners, than like resignation.

What are the skills necessary for dealing with chronic pain, pain that you have day in and day out and

probably will have for a long time? If you have chronic pain, your job is to (1) acknowledge that pain and its burden, and (2) enrich your life exponentially. This is coming at chronic pain from two angles: one is acknowledging it and understanding what it costs you in terms of suffering; the other is opening up your life, making it so rich that no pain can commandeer it.

Before you lose your creative energy to depression and before you are disabled by somatic manifestations of your anxieties, you can begin to live with your suffering in such a way that life's frustrations and disappointments are part of the rich tapestry of living. In order to have such an attitude, you need to cultivate skills that enable you to be present for all of your life, not just the moments you prefer.

Acknowledging your suffering—exactly what it is costing you to live with your painful situation—is the first step on the path of penetration into the wellspring of your experience, and it holds tremendous potential for your liberation from depression and anxiety.

How do you learn to acknowledge your suffering? I think it lies in practicing respect for all your feelings.

You must treat your anxiety, pain, or hatred gently, respectfully, not resisting it but living with it. When you do resist it, you need to treat that with respect, too. You must develop your capacity to appreciate each thing as it is now, while inundated with suffering. Nothing should be treated with more respect than anything else.

When you are able to give all your feelings your full attention, without believing that one feeling is good and another bad (even if you think it is), then compassion, irritation, pain, hatred, and joy are all sacred. When our way is very hard, we have an opportunity to use every flicker of our imaginative fire. This attitude gives us a tremendous sense of freedom and creativity. We feel as if we can imbue any situation with the richness of our own poetry.

After I was bedridden with rheumatoid arthritis, my mobility was so impaired that volunteers from the San Francisco Zen Center began cleaning my room, doing my laundry, and washing my hair. As my body got weaker and my pain greater, and I could no longer deny my situation, I realized that this is the life I have been given. This is the body I have to live the rest of my life with. Within my experience, this is my reality. Every day, I woke up and began to say, "What

part of my body can I use today to do the things I have to do?" Strangely, I found relief in just being the suffering. Because I was so ill, nothing was demanded of me: no function, no performance, no self-sufficiency, no heroics. Just me living and breathing. This baseline life allowed me to live in a very simple, non-demanding way.

At first, my conscious life was all pain. Acknowledging the pain and its power eventually allowed me to explore my body fully and find there actually were experiences in my body besides the pain—here is pain, here is bending, here is breath, here is movement, here is sun warming, here is unbearable fire, here is tightness, something different wherever I looked.

My life began to be filled with sensation. Not just pain but sensation of all kinds: children's voices outside my window; subtle changes in the shadows on the wall as the day passed; feeling my entire body when I turned over in bed; noticing the temperature differences in the various parts of my body, those inside and outside the covers; the contours of a familiar face. Rather than shrinking, my world was as intricate as ever, just on a much more subtle level. Because I was no longer goal-directed, sensation and feeling filled my consciousness. I kept telling myself

this must be the world of babies and animals. Everything is fresh and fascinating.

Valuing these subtle experiences is very unconventional thinking; it is extraordinary to be willing to be involved with ordinary things, to be willing to live in the mundane. We don't have a lot of role models for this kind of attention in our society. Thus, we are very deeply touched when they appear to us. It is so moving when it does happen that it can inspire us for years. When I was first very sick, lying in bed, I happened to hear a recording of Mississippi Fred MacDowell's Delta blues music. He strums a guitar and sings in a rough voice. He plucks each string of his guitar as if it were his own heartstring he's vibrating to express his pain. When I heard him, I felt that if he could manage to touch a guitar string that way, I could try to live as sincerely as possible.

If you are in great pain much of the time, it becomes absolutely necessary that you create a life for yourself that you can not only tolerate but love and enjoy. I am probably in more pain than most of the people I know, yet I see my life as one of the most pleasant ways of living currently available to human beings. I believe my life is enjoyable and satisfying because I take my pleasure as seriously as my pain.

And what I take most seriously is living each moment of my life, to the extent that I am able to pay that much attention.

Another way to put this is that I try to do each thing for its own sake, to experience every motion, every endeavour, every contact, for what it is. Washing the dishes is not just about getting the dishes clean; it's about feeling the warm, soapy water soothing my arthritic fingers and noticing the brief discomfort in my elbow joints when I lift a clean dish into the dish drainer. Folding the laundry is an opportunity for smelling its cleanness and luxuriating in the simple movements as a counterpoint to my complex life. There need be no better reason than that I am alive and doing these activities. This is engagement that arises out of a commitment to live as thoroughly as a human can.

When we concern ourselves with the problem of chronic pain, whether psychological or physical, we also need to talk about pleasure. If we are in great pain, often the first step is simply noticing that we have any pleasure at all in the midst of terrible suffering. Then we need to learn how to notice that pleasure is actually present in the experience of pain. Not that pleasure distracts us from the pain or

chases it away but that it is able to send little tendrils of relief or comfort into the pain, in the same way that darkness interpenetrates light, that death interpenetrates life.

I think that if you are overwhelmed by emotional stress or physical pain, it is advisable to think about cultivating the ability to recognize pleasure wherever the potential for its existence may lie. I say this not because I am a thrill-seeking hedonist but because somebody has to say it. Not so many Zen lecturers or stress reduction teachers or arthritis doctors do, so I have to fill the breach.

It would be useful to first explore the relationship between pleasure and pain. Like a lot of pairs—light/dark, life/death, love/hate, sickness/health—pleasure and pain are interdependent. That is, they have meaning only in relation to each other. Our ability to perceive each of them is totally dependent on our understanding of the other. Their existence is so commingled in our consciousness that if we decide to concentrate our attention on one of them, the other comes into our consciousness eventually, whether we intend it or not.

Sickness and health are an example I use often,

because I work with people who have chronic physical problems. When I began to recuperate from the worst ravages of rheumatoid arthritis, and spent more and more time out of bed, I climbed onto the ever-turning wheel of the sickness-health dichotomy. Every morning when I awoke, I'd think, "Am I better or worse today?" Because I was emotionally involved with the answer—I was repelled by my sickness and clinging to any signs of good health—I was either cast down and disappointed, or raised up and elated, depending on whether I was feeling better or worse.

So the problem with pain is aversion, and the problem with pleasure is clinging. The solution is to just live your life without getting tripped up by all these fixations, but "just" means living your whole life. It's being alive for all the details of your life and not picking out the moments that you're going to attend to and those you're going to ignore. You can take care of your body simply because it yearns to be taken care of and you are alive, listening to its yearnings, flowing in and out of its intelligence, not making it into a separate being apart from yourself. You can attend to your relationships with friends and mates with a heart open to all their various characteristics, those you enjoy and those you find annoying.

There is an absence of struggle when you pay attention this way. What is really going on is that you are doing what needs to be done for your body and for your relationships; it's not you against sickness or pain or your friends' personalities.

When you do prefer one state of mind over another, whether it's pleasure or pain, you lose your capacity to be present in the moment. When you're making love, you're taking time out to think, "Can we do this again before morning?" Instead of tasting every morsel in your mouth during the birthday dinner lovingly prepared by your friends, you're thinking, "What's the next course?" You're constantly living somewhere else, in the past or the future.

If you do see your cycle of craving and aversion, and regard it with some humor or detachment, bemused at the fact that you're always running after something or away from something, you can begin to practice the disinterested pursuit of pleasure. This is pleasure recognized and fostered rather than frantically and compulsively grasped at. You can cultivate pleasure in the same way that you eat sensibly or put on your jacket when it's cold. This is just something you do for your and others' wellbeing.

Why should you cultivate pleasure in this disinterested way? Recent research indicates that pleasure is good for you. Pleasure is biochemically better for your health than pain is; it produces different blood chemistry than pain does. Pleasurable experiences make you breathe deeper, and some of them make your immune system function better. Pleasure relaxes your body, so that your muscles are more flexible and responsive. They can gently pull your joints apart as you move, keeping you from getting arthritis or easing the arthritis you already have.

The technique that many of us use to become more conscious of the fundamental elements of our lives is meditation, which can be defined simply as awareness. There is an infinite variety of things to be aware of: our breath, body sensations, thoughts, moods, physical movements; the animal presence of other people in the room; the sounds we hear, to name a few.

Learning how to pay this kind of attention can radically change the quality of pain or stress, because the kind of mind it produces is clear and focused compared to our usual churning, busy, jumbled mind. This lucid mind gives us a perspective from which we

can set priorities in our lives based on our real values rather than mere habit. A great deal of our daily stress stems from confusion over what is really important to us. Do we actually need to get dinner on the table as fast as possible, or is that just a habit we could re-evaluate? It is good to become conscious of our actual values. We might really believe that our well-being is more important than living efficiently, but we might have forgotten our beliefs in the crush of daily demands.

So how do you begin to develop this ability to pay attention and use it to cultivate your healing, your sense of ease, your capacity to discover the happiness that is already there?

Every day you can practice paying attention to the world in which you live this very moment. Sit still for twenty to thirty minutes and just notice your sensations, thoughts, and sense impressions. Practice noticing them without worrying about what they are. After some weeks of this sort of practice, you will find it easier to shift into this mode of attention whenever you wish. Even though the stress of pain or anxiety is very compelling, the more you practice bringing to it your full attention, the more skilled you become. When you become able to include this

awareness in all your everyday interactions, you will notice that your life takes on a more wholehearted quality, as though you had more of yourself available for each thing that you do.

Another form of meditation practice is to focus your attention on just one thing, like your breath, carefully counting your inhalations and exhalations and noticing the pauses in between. Focusing on anything to the exclusion of everything else is called a concentration practice. You are developing your ability to focus all your attention on one particular thing and let everything else, no matter how potentially riveting, drop away.

When you are doing a concentration practice, you not only notice when your attention is steadily focused on the object you have chosen, but you also notice when it wanders away. If you are new to meditation, you will probably be amazed at how often your mind wanders away from the object on which you have chosen to concentrate. This wandering quality is a basic propensity of the mind. I call it "puppy mind," a tendency to run about and sniff everything.

It doesn't matter how many times your mind wanders away, perhaps thousands in a single half-hour

meditation session. What's important is that you notice that your mind has wandered, and specifically where it has wandered to, then you gently disengage from that diversion and guide your attention back to your chosen focus, whatever that is.

I think of concentration practice as developing the "coming-back" muscle. The more times your mind wanders away, the more opportunities you have to develop your ability to refocus your attention, to strengthen your coming-back muscle.

Concentration meditation practice is not a matter of ruthlessly eliminating the random thoughts that tug at your attention; it is a matter of patiently and kindly, ideally without self-criticism or irritation, abandoning the side roads and turning your attention back to the object of your concentration.



The following is a good practice to build up your coming-back muscle:

1. Arrange yourself in a position that is both stable and comfortable.

2. Settle yourself and begin to notice your breath, specifically the inhalations and exhalations.
3. Without changing the rhythm or pace of your breath, begin to count the inhalations and exhalations from one to ten. An inhalation and an exhalation count as a pair. That is, the first time you breathe in, you say "one" in your mind; when you breathe out, you say "one" again. The next inhalation is "two"; the next exhalation is "two."
4. When you get to ten, start over again, so that you are counting a continuous series of one to ten. Continue this throughout your period of meditation—say, for twenty to thirty minutes.

Whenever your attention leaves your counting, note specifically where it goes—for example, to what you have to do after this period of meditation, to a fantasy of what you'd rather be doing, to thoughts of irritation or agitation, to sleepiness, to a work project, whatever. It doesn't matter where it goes; what's important is that you gently return it to your breath and your counting. The counting is to help you notice that your attention has strayed.

What may be especially interesting to you is where your attention goes. You may notice obsessive patterns and habits of mind you weren't aware of before starting this practice. No matter how many times you lose track of your counting, note where your attention goes, over and over again, and then gently bring it back to your counting. This exercise both develops your coming-back muscle and reveals your own particular habits of mind, the favorite places you revisit again and again.

When we become skillful at noticing our habits of mind and letting them come and go without disturbing us, we realize that each state of mind, including strong emotions, only lasts for seconds before being replaced by another one. Anger turns to sadness, which turns to melancholy, which turns to comfort, which turns to relaxation, which turns to enjoyment, and so on. We come to appreciate that the underlying nature of puppy mind is actually a ceaseless, uninterrupted flow of thoughts and feelings. When we understand this truth, we can choose to settle into the awareness of each thought or feeling as it arises and passes. In this way, we cultivate some freedom from the frantic imbalance created by each one.

In general, it is very important to be patient with

yourself when you are beginning a meditation practice. You are attempting something that is inherently very difficult: breaking old habits. And these habits aren't even as blatant as biting your fingernails or smoking cigarettes. They're habits of mind. The rule of thumb is that it takes ten thousand times to notice that you have a bad habit, ten thousand more times to catch yourself doing it, and ten thousand more times to substitute an alternative behavior. The ancients who derived this dictum understood the coercive power of habit. With this practice, you will begin to as well.

Darlene Cohen is a Zen teacher at the San Francisco Zen Center. She counsels chronic pain clients and gives workshops and lectures in the Bay area on arthritis and living with pain. This article is adapted from her new book, Finding a Joyful Life in the Heart of Pain, published by Shambhala Publications.

☺ KNOW O PAIN! ☺

-Ven. Visuddhacara-

Know O Pain!

You could do your worst
Devastate this body of mine
Reduce me to skin and bones
Pummel me into pulp
Cut me into tiny strips
Carve me into little pieces
Crush me to smithereens
And make a fine powder of my bones
But know O Pain

For this mind is above you
It can laugh you in the face
It can sing and dance
It can swim and run
It can watch and wait
It can meditate

Know O Pain!
This mind is composed
It is calm and clear
Mindful and equanimous
Beyond your sphere of influence
So you can do as you will

You can get this body
You can have all of it
But as for the mind, O Pain
You will never ever get it!



FEAR IS THE MAJOR INGREDIENT OF PAIN

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

A member of our community has very bad teeth. He has needed to have many teeth pulled out, but he'd rather not have the anaesthetic. Eventually, he found a dental surgeon in Perth who would extract his teeth without anaesthetic. He has been there several times. He finds it no problem.

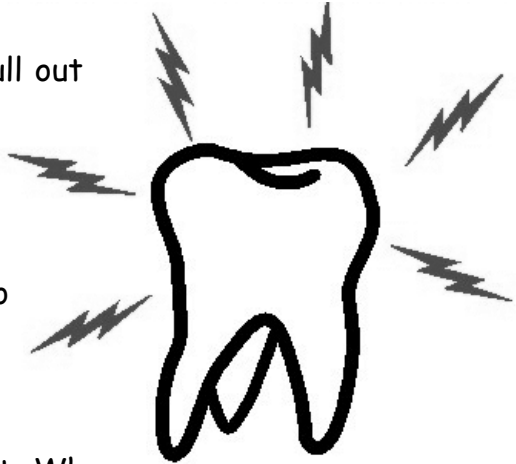


Allowing a tooth to be extracted by a dentist without anaesthetic might seem impressive enough, but this character went one better. He pulled out his own tooth without anaesthetic.

We saw him, outside the monastery workshop, holding a freshly pulled tooth smeared with his blood, in the claws of an ordinary pair of pliers. It was no problem: he cleaned the pliers of blood before he returned them to the workshop.

I asked him how he had managed to do such a thing. What he said exemplifies why fear is the major ingredient of pain.

"When I decided to pull out my own tooth - it was such a hassle going all the way to the dentist - it didn't hurt. When I walked to the workshop, that didn't hurt. When I picked up the pairs of pliers, it didn't hurt. When I held the tooth in the grip of the pliers, it still didn't hurt. When I wiggled the pliers and pulled, it hurt then, but only for a couple of seconds. Once the tooth was out, it didn't hurt much at all. It was only five seconds of pain, that's all."



You, my reader, probably grimaced when you read this true story. Because of fear, you probably felt more pain than he did! If you tried the same feat, it would probably hurt terribly, even before you reached the workshop to get the pliers. Anticipation - fear - is the major ingredient of pain.

I AM NOT MY PAIN



It's not MY PAIN

It's just a pain

When we shine our bodily pain with the energy of mindfulness and watch the pain as it is without denial, we somehow able to detach ourselves from the pain. We are then not the pain. The pain is not-ME, not-MINE and not-I. This is in accordance with the Buddha's teaching of Anatta (non-self) where the pain is just a process and does not belong to us. Why bother the difference? There is actually a big psychological difference in responding to pain by saying, "The head is painful" as compared to "MY HEAD is painful". The latter will amplify the 'I', the ownership of the pain, the frustration associated with it and consequently the pain experience. If you don't belief, try it out!

Cracking Up!

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

In my first year in Thailand, we would be taken from monastery to monastery in the back of a small truck. The senior monks had the best seats, of course, in the cab up front. We junior monks sat squashed on hard wooden benches on the rear tray. Above the benches was a low metal frame, over which was stretched a tarpaulin to protect us from rain and dust.



The roads were all dirt roads, poorly maintained. When the wheels met a pothole, the truck went down and the junior monks went up. Crack! Many times I cracked my head on those hard metal frames. Moreover, being a bald headed monk, I had no 'padding' to cushion the blow.

I swore every time I hit my head - in English, of course, so the Thai monks couldn't understand. But, when the Thai monks hit their heads, they only laughed! I couldn't figure it out. How can you laugh when you hit your head so painfully hard? Perhaps, I considered, those Thai monks had already hit their

heads too many times and there had been some permanent damage.

Because I used to be a scientist, I decided to do an experiment. I resolved to laugh, like the Thai monks, the next time I cracked my head, just to see what it was like. You know what I discovered? I found out that if you laugh when you hit your head, it hurts much less.

Laughter releases endorphins into your bloodstream, which are nature's painkillers. It also enhances your immune system to fight off any infections. So, it helps to laugh when you feel pain. If you still don't believe me, then try it the next time you hit your head.

The experience taught me that when life is painful, it hurts less when you see the funny side and manage a laugh.



Ha! Ha! Ha!

BODY SCAN FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

The body scan is a useful skill that is learned as a part of mindfulness meditation developed by Dr. Jon Kabat Zinn. The body scan allows one to develop a focused, concentrated awareness of the body. One develops the ability to be a compassionate witness to whatever is happening in the body at any particular moment in time, to be present without judgment, expectations, or demands and without a need to change anything. Often when an unpleasant sensation arises in the body, the immediate (and unconscious) reaction is to physically tense the muscles in that area. This tension increases the physical dis-comfort while at the same time decreasing the total volume of air exchanged with each breath.

Once learned, the body scan can be used to work with the experience of physical pain. Paradoxically, focused awareness on the specific pain as it occurs in the body allows one to experience the subtle shifts and changes that happen during the subjective experience of pain in the present moment. As a result, pain is not magnified by getting caught up in stories and memories of previous pain or anticipation of prolonged or future pain. Instead, the attention is

focused on what is happening in the present moment with a particular physical sensation of pain. One begins to learn subtle cues from the body that indicate an imbalance or the need for a particular intervention, such as a change in position or rest.



BODY SCAN INSTRUCTIONS

When doing the body scan, it is important to be in a safe, comfortable place free from distractions and interruptions. It is also important to wear loose, comfortable clothing

that will not restrict the body's breathing in any way. The body tends to cool when doing a body scan, so a light cover may be needed to keep the body comfortably warm. The body scan can be learned either lying down or in a seated position, although it is more easily learned lying down.

Begin by assuming a comfortable position lying on the floor or on a bed. (A pillow or rolled towel under the knees may be used to relieve pressure on the lower back.) Take a few slow, deep breaths focusing on the

breath itself. Then gently allow your attention to move to the entire body as it is breathing.

Now, focus on the toes of the left foot so that the full attention is on the toes of the left foot. Then move the awareness to the left foot, ankle, on up the calf to the knee, the thigh, and on to the left hip. Breath is allowed to move in and out of each part of the body as it is scanned. Next, allow awareness to move across the pelvis and down to the toes of the right foot, then to the whole foot and up the calf to the knee, the thigh, and to the hip and pelvis. From here move awareness up through the lower abdomen and lower back, up to the chest, upper back, and shoulders.

Next focus awareness on the fingers of both hands, moving up the hands to the wrists and both arms and returning to the shoulders. From here move through the neck, throat, all parts of the face, the ears, and then top of the head.

When this is completed, breath is invited in through the toes, up through the entire body, and out an imaginary opening at the crown of the head, so that the breath is moving freely from one end of the body to the other. Finally, the breath is allowed to flow in through the top of the head, down through the whole

body, and out the toes. End by feeling the entire body lying down breathing. When ready, gently deepen the breath bringing small movements to the fingers and toes, the arms, and legs. Roll over to one side, pause briefly, and then using the arms, slowly push up to a seated position, bringing the head up last. Pause in a seated position for a few breaths noticing how the body feels before proceeding to the next activity.

Besides its role in pain management, body scan may also help in early diagnosis of disease. When we practice body scan regularly, we develop heightened awareness to our bodily symptoms e.g. pain. These bodily symptoms are frequently natural signal to us to do something appropriate e.g. get an appointment to see doctor, exercise more, pay more attention to diet, have more rest etc. In this way, body scan may help with early diagnosis and intervention of disease.

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WORKING WITH CHRONIC PAIN

-By Dr. Chris Stewart-Patterson-
(Shambala Sun Magazine)

Chronic pain is bad enough, but at least there are ways not to add to your misery.

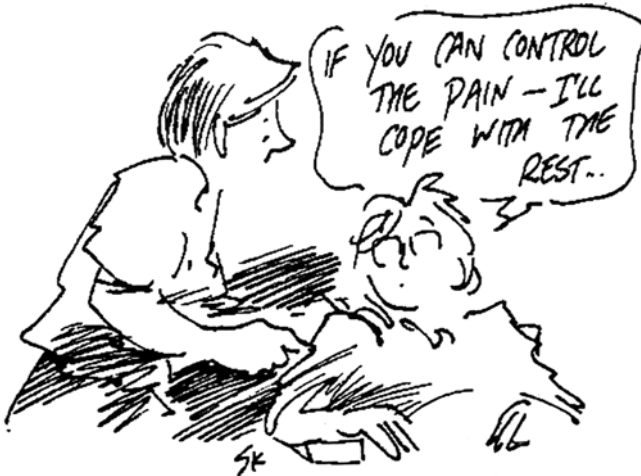
Everyone adores my friend Liz. She's a gregarious blond surfer girl with a killer smile



and a hearty laugh. She's also in daily pain and fatigue arising from a rare and debilitating medical condition. Before her illness, Liz and I would run together for up to two hours and chat about everything, occasionally touching on my Buddhist practice. She would grin dismissively and shake her head saying, "That's just too wild." The truly wild thing is now when she tells me how she copes with her chronic pain, it's pure dharma. Liz says her greatest techniques are just accepting what is and being in the moment.

Like Liz, many people experience chronic pain. According to current estimates, ten percent of North Americans experience daily pain; the percentage is far greater for those over 65. Medicine has made

great inroads into the control of acutely painful conditions using medications and anesthetic techniques. It has also had some success with the types of pain associated with terminal cancer, using morphine and related drugs. But the long-term pain that attends non-fatal conditions—such as injuries or lower back maladies—often responds poorly to standard medical treatments.



It can be difficult for people living with such chronic pain to escape a long, slow slide into progressive disability unless they have adequate coping skills. Pain by nature can be awful, dispiriting, exhausting. The fight to maintain a positive frame of mind is

demanding and often punctuated with brutal episodes of despair. But there are methods to help prevent a high degree of reactivity to chronic pain from adding yet another layer of misery. Chronic pain management does not, however, usually focus on fixing the cause of the pain. By the time a person gets to chronic pain management, standard surgical and medical treatments have been judged ineffective. Chronic pain management is about reducing suffering.

This kind of emphasis in chronic pain management points to the astounding interface between evolving modern medical practice and the dharma. Respected researchers such as Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn have demonstrated that mindfulness techniques improve quality of life for those in chronic pain. Major institutes such as the National Institutes of Health recommend relaxation techniques for pain, including breath-focused meditation.

In the pain clinic where I sometimes work we introduce patients to relaxation techniques immediately. They can choose from various methods, but the simplest and most accepted one is to follow the breath. The instructions are often almost exactly those used in Buddhist meditation techniques such as *shamatha* (mindfulness). People regularly report that

these techniques change their relationship to pain. The pain is there but their reactivity to it decreases.

A friend gave Liz a copy of a book by Thich Nhat Hanh. He advises when doing the dishes to just do the dishes. Liz's response to this reference to mindfulness was one of respectful amazement: "This is what I do! When I do the dishes, I just enjoy doing the dishes." Although this had always been her natural tendency, Liz seized upon this technique even more vigorously to manage her pain. It's not so much a distraction technique for her; it's just that her focus is broader than her pain when she lives in the moment of her experience. It's akin to forms of *vipashyana* (awareness) meditation where we are aware of sensations, including pain, but not exclusively focused on any one sensation for any length of time.

A core concept in chronic pain treatment is pacing—essentially the middle way of approaching physical activity. Liz is the pacing queen. She does one activity most days, but mindfully adjusts her activity to her current energy and pain levels. If she is having a bad day, she stays at home and has her friends visit her. Pacing is simple in concept but difficult to execute artfully, as the emphasis is on staying active but not overdoing it. Many people give in to the seductive trap

of doing too little and avoiding short-term pain. In the long run, unfortunately, this can worsen many types of chronic pain by decreasing flexibility, weakening muscles and reducing our ability to get enough oxygen to our muscles. The opposite tactic of continuously pushing the envelope and denying true limitations can lead to constant exhaustion and continuous flare-up pain. Pacing is about finding the fine balance.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a form of psychological treatment that helps overcome irrational, self-defeating thoughts that lead to depression and anxiety. In Buddhist terms, this technique is essentially the replacement of unskillful thoughts with skillful thoughts. What we believe and think about pain affects our experience of the pain and our progress in dealing with it.

A woman who worked on a hospital ward with paralyzed spinal patients suffered acute low-back pain while lifting a patient. Her doctor prescribed routine exercises to help her get better. As with many patients, she suffered flare-up pain during physiotherapy. She was adamant in her belief that this pain meant that the back exercises could paralyze her, so she refused to continue despite the repeated reassurances of her many health providers.

Sadly, she became deconditioned, put on weight, became progressively more inactive and remains painfully disabled years later. She also subsequently developed depression, which happens to half of the people who are in chronic pain.

CBT is helpful to seventy percent of the depressed patients who try it, so perhaps it could have successfully challenged this unfortunate woman's irrational fear of paralysis. CBT provides effective antidotes to various unhelpful thoughts such as obsession with blame, misinterpretation of symptoms and inability to see the remaining positives in life. Liz—now restricted to walking—doesn't bother to mourn her lost athleticism; instead she revels in the positive aspects of her present experience: "I love walking. You wouldn't believe all the people I meet!"

Paradoxically these techniques—relaxation, pacing and mindfulness—work best when not combined with a high or immediate expectation of pain reduction, as that may inadvertently enhance pain aversion. Health-care providers working with chronic pain patients are usually careful to point out that these techniques are about increasing daily functioning and adapting to living with the pain, not eliminating the pain. People new to chronic pain don't often appreciate the

inherent contradiction in frantically striving to reduce suffering. Experienced guidance is crucial in learning to develop a relaxed approach to living with pain.

Liz now lives with a degree of equanimity, grace and balance far greater than most of us, and tenaciously maintains a warm engagement with the world despite her pain. I certainly miss our runs, but Liz brings something more precious to my life now: inspiration. At one point Liz was so sick she was hospitalized. When she went home, she was bed-bound and had to be spoon-fed by her mom. She suffered some transient despair but then rebounded, saying, "Hey, I'm gonna write a book on my laptop." Even at the nadir of her illness, Liz avoided the potential decline from active surfer girl to suffer girl. In terms of her spirit, she's morphed into super girl.

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THE ART OF TRANSFORMING PAIN

I AM BREATHING IN AND MAKING MY WHOLE BODY CALM AND AT PEACE. I AM BREATHING OUT AND MAKING MY WHOLE BODY CALM AND AT PEACE. THIS IS HOW ONE PRACTICES

-The Sutra on Full Awareness of Breathing -

I recommend the following techniques for dealing with bodily pains based on Buddhist principles of mindfulness in breathing, compassion, letting go, non-self, impermanence and skilful reflection.



1. Find a quiet environment e.g. alone at home.
2. Find a comfortable position e.g. lying on a couch.
3. Breathe in and out naturally with full awareness.

4. As you breath in, allow the healing energy of breath to suffuse the part of your body that is painful e.g. headache.

5. As you breathe out, let go the tension from the part of the body with a gentle sound of sigh.

6. Make friend and radiate loving kindness to the painful part of the body as though you are coaxing a crying baby e.g. "Oh dear Head, I know it's bad, may you be free from pain".



7. Mindfully and patiently watch the pain come and go, decreasing and increasing as though you are listening to a beautiful piece of music, "Pain, You Are WelCome and WelGo!" Sing a song to coax the pain.

8. Skilfully reflect, "It's BAD, don't be MAD". Allow the physical pain (BAD) as it is and don't worry too much and add on mental pain (MAD) to worsen the pain.

9. Be grateful to the pain. It could have been worse! A mild and transient tension headache is obviously much better than an acute and severe brain tumour pain. Pain is also a natural signal that we should go for medical check-up.

10. Pain is a Teacher! It teaches you to appreciate the joy of no-pain when you are pain free later. Understanding of pain also gives us insight on the nature of life and existence.

May all beings be free from pain!

SELF MORTIFICATION - I WANT MY PAIN!

Have you come across people who refuse to take pain killers with the wrong reasons in the name of Buddhism? Of course, there is nothing wrong with refusing pain killers if we can tolerate the pain - better still. After all, pain killers may have side effects like gastric pain and sedation. But, some people refuse to take pain killers with wrong views.

One may wrongly believe that we have to torture our body enough with pain before we can gain enlightenment. The Buddha has clearly stated that this extreme of self mortification doesn't work for enlightenment, and He proposed the Middle Path (Noble Eightfold Path). In fact, this self mortification was exactly what some of the ascetics were doing during the Buddha's time. They wrongly believed that by adequately torturing one's body, one could release the soul trap inside the body. This is of course not true from a Buddhist point of view!

So, even though pain can be a meditation object, it doesn't mean that we must torture ourselves. I remember clearly a wonderful lesson that I have learned in a meditation retreat, "Don't practise 1st

Noble Truth meditation (Suffering). Practise 3rd Noble Truth meditation (End of Suffering)". We should be compassionate to our bodily pain, by offering it relief with appropriate use of pain killers when necessary.

Another misconception that may arise among Buddhist is regarding the use of morphine for severe pain relief. One common reaction may be, "Morphine? No! I don't take drugs. It's against the 5th precept and I'll get addicted". Another common reaction may be, "No! I must not take it



because it makes the mind drowsy and it's not conducive for a good rebirth!" All these are misconceptions. The actual fact is that therapeutic and effective dose of morphine allows the patient to feel comfortable and to be in an alert state of mind - this is more likely to condition a good rebirth than otherwise. May you let go your pain!



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By the power of the MERITS
accrued from the writing & compilation
of this book, may my MOTHER'S breast
cancer never relapse and my FATHER'S
diabetes mellitus & hypercholesterolemia
be under control!